

Youth Participation in Governance

...creating youth friendly communities



The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible, and achieve it, generation after generation.

Pearl S. Buck

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Executive Summary

...focus on the promotion of participatory skills for all, not just leadership skills for the few. Leaders will always emerge, but all children and young people need the chance to learn the multiple skills of listening and collaborating in groups if they are to discover that they can play very different roles in building communities and achieving change (United Nations, 2004, pp. 286 & 287)

I. Purpose

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has a vision of a healthy, sustainable, thriving community. The foundation of this vision is the active engagement of all its members. Through its implementation of the Youth Engagement Strategy, the HRM Recreation, Tourism, and Culture Department (RTC) has learned that young people must be included in community decision-making and planning toward HRM's vision. No longer should youth be excluded from the definition of "the public".

To this end, HRM has called for a literature review that highlights strategies and best practices of youth engagement in governance. This document will help guide HRM as it creates an inclusive, sustainable strategy to bring young people to the decision-making "table".

II. Defining the terms

In the literature, there are many definitions for the terms youth, participation, and governance. In practice, youth participation in governance can and does look differently depending on who is involved and the structure in which it occurs. The following definition of youth participation in governance is based on other literature and is articulated here to clarify a working definition for this literature review:

Youth participation in governance means that youth have equitable access to and play an active role in making decisions, setting policies, and influencing outcomes on matters relevant to their lives at the municipal, organizational, and program level. Youth is defined as the stage of life between ten and nineteen years of age.

III. Rationale for engaging youth in local governance and community decision-making

Youth are active and contributing members of society *now*, not future citizens or leaders of tomorrow, as they are referred to by many adult leaders. Nationwide research funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (2000) revealed one of the most consistent concerns of youth is that their voices are not heard, respected, or taken seriously by adults. In a Health Canada Report, 51% of teenagers said they were rarely or *never* listened to (2001). Young people in HRM have said "... youth should have a say in the things that happen in the neighbourhood [and governments should] talk to the youth, see what they want and look into it more [and] come to our schools and ask us our opinions and involve us in community meetings" (Halifax youth participant, *Growing up In Cities Canada*, January, 2005). Youth in rural Nova Scotia are echoing the same sentiment: "Youth really want to be involved, that's the whole point that we are trying to get to. Let us be involved. Let us be a part of your town" (Levy, as cited in Siegbahn, C., 2001, p. 1). The strong desire of youth to participate is the most compelling rationale for engaging youth in governance. Other rationale include:

- *Municipalities have a legal obligation to engage youth.* The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most universally supported human rights treaty in history, was adopted in 1989, and states that children (0 to 18 years) have a right to express their views freely and fully participate in all matters that affect them. Since the ratification of the UNCRC, other international and national commitments to engaging youth in governance have been made.¹ These commitments will only be fully realized when they are supported by local governments and rooted in the communities that children inhabit.
- *Youth participation in governance benefits youth.* Research shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities will be less depressed, have higher self-esteem, be more physically active, show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities and will more likely reach full and healthy development (United Nations, 2004; National League of Cities, no date; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2000; International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003).
- *Youth participation benefits communities.* Young people’s energy, creativity, unique perspectives, and propensity for action lead to positive, beneficial change in organizations, communities and nations. Young people’s energy and initiative has built international and national reform movements, i.e. antinuclear, environment, gay and lesbian rights (Lui, J., 2003; Carpini, M., no date). At the community level, youth initiatives have addressed issues such as safety, health, public transport, and parks and recreation.
- *Youth participation benefits governments.* Municipal leaders regularly make decisions, shape policies and take action on issues that directly affect youth, i.e. public transport, parks and recreation, use of public spaces, health, child care, education, housing, etc... Youth are the foremost experts on their experiences, needs, and interactions with local environments and their community. Engaging youth in decision-making processes helps governments make decisions that are more responsive and appropriate to youth needs and interests.
- *Youth engagement in governance is sound professional practice.* Over the decades of 1960 to 2000, youth serving organizations have shifted from focusing on youth deficits and working *on* or *for* young people to solve their problems, to focusing on youth assets and partnering *with* youth to build “positive futures for themselves, communities and society” (Pittman, K., 2000; HeartWood, <http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/approach.shtml>, Para 2). As a result of this shift, youth-serving organizations have increasingly been working to achieve participatory involvement, decision-making and leadership *with* youth, rather than their ability to deliver services *to* youth (Milburn, 2000). Municipal government departments and youth-serving organizations will increasingly be expected to integrate these practices into their work.

IV. Strategies for engaging youth in local governance

There is no one “right” way to promote, or “blueprint” to develop youth participation in governance. There are only principles and practices which have been proven to be successful.

¹ Chapter 25 of Agenda 21, signed by world leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit; Habitat II, the 1996 UN Conference on Human Settlements; The UN’s World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond; A World Fit for Children, adopted by 180 nations at the 2002 UN special session on Children; Government of Canada’s A Canada Fit for Children released in 2004.

Every city, community, and organization will have different youth issues and capacities to engage youth in governance. And, each and every young person is unique and will have different needs and abilities to engage.

One crucial principle is employing a diversity of strategies for engaging youth in governance. Youth councils and youth representation on boards are typically thought of in relation to youth governance. While these strategies tend to allow youth direct interaction with adult decision-makers, and a greater capacity to directly influence planning and decision-making, they generally only reach a small percentage of the youth population, often those youth who already feel comfortable in leadership roles. On the other hand, less formal structures, such as youth action teams, typically engage a larger number and broader diversity of youth. The hands-on nature of youth action teams is appealing to young people's desire for action. To build the capacity of all youth to engage in governance, a framework which incorporates multiple levels for youth participation is the best strategy, including opportunities to engage at the neighbourhood and community level (i.e. youth action teams) as well as opportunities to engage within formal government structures (i.e. youth representation on boards).

Six different strategies are described in this literature review. In Nova Scotia, established organizations, projects, processes and structures can serve as foundations on which to build a better integrated framework for youth participation in governance.

Research and consultation involves a range of approaches, from adult or youth-led consultation research, i.e. surveys, focus groups, interviews to adult or youth-directed participatory action research, i.e. community asset mapping. Best practices include a participatory action approach or on-going consultation including follow-up with youth and opportunities for youth to be involved in the actions that result.

Coached by the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, **HRM Recreation Tourism and Culture** (RTC) used participatory action research with youth to guide the development of their Youth Engagement Strategy. The results of this research have been used to develop RTC unit action plans that will increase youth participation in the planning and delivery of RTC youth services. The research results will also guide RTC recommendations to city council for a youth friendly HRM.

Youth on Boards is youth representation on municipal or organizational boards of directors. Youth should comprise 25% of the board; have full voting rights, and well-defined roles and responsibilities. When these conditions are met, youth have the power to influence outcomes through direct interaction with adult decision-makers. The **Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Project** (Halifax, NS) has a youth board and 25% youth representation on the board of directors. Youth and adults genuinely share decision making at the LGBYP and youth have a tremendous sense of ownership over the governance of the organization.

Youth advisory councils are made up of youth members, who represent and advocate for youth needs in their community to a governing body, i.e. city council. Effective councils have specific roles and responsibilities for youth, direct links to power (i.e. will directly meet with the mayor or city council at a designated time each month), core funding and resource supports, a consistent adult mentor, and longevity. Without these attributes, councils are at risk of being merely token practice of youth engagement. The **town of Parsboro** (Nova Scotia) has had a youth council since 1997. The youth council is funded and supported to carry out projects, one of which was the development of a skate park. The towns of Bridgewater and Truro are currently working to initiate similar youth councils.

Local Action Projects are meaningful initiatives that aim to change some aspect of, or contribute something beneficial to the community. The most meaningful projects are youth-identified, engage a broad diversity of youth, and involve collaboration between youth, adults, and organizations or municipalities. Youth are attracted to the hands-on, action-oriented nature of the projects, and the direct, tangible results of their participation. Since 1999, the **HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development** has helped more than 15 Youth Action Teams (YATs) get started in Nova Scotia. The **Spryfield YAT** is one example. Every year, members of Spryfield's YAT host an annual clean up of the MacIntosh Run River, a Valentine's Dinner for the Single Parents Centre, and a memorial on December 6th in honour of the 14 women killed at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in 1987.

Youth-run programs are run by youth but delivered by an adult-led municipal department or community organization. Peer-led initiatives have been shown to be successful – often youth know how to create engaging programs for their peers better than adults do! The promotion of youth-run programs which serve the community is also necessary to help raise the profile of youth as equal members in a community. **Capital Health** provides funding for student-driven tobacco education in secondary schools (interested students write a proposal and submit it to Capital Health).

Many youth are founders and directors of their own organizations. Youth own all of the primary governance and decision-making power in *youth-run organizations*. Youth hire staff, run their own meetings, raise funds, develop budgets, and make decisions on expenditures. While youth-run organizations often struggle for funding and membership continuity, they have tremendous capacity to effect positive change in their communities. The support of an adult can be helpful for the continuity and success of the organization. The **Nova Scotia Secondary Schools Students' Association** is a non-profit organization run by student leaders. Divided into two main groups, the Provincial Cabinet and the Conference Committee, the Provincial Cabinet advises the Minister of Education on student issues and school matters, and the Conference Committee hosts an annual conference to help students learn more about themselves and their abilities.

V. Indicators of successful youth participation in governance

A thorough review of youth governance practices revealed that the most authentic, meaningful and active practices of youth participation share common elements. These common elements can be described as success indicators of youth participation in governance, and are goals towards which organizations and governments can strive.

Inclusion

A diversity of youth, not just the select group that tend to stand out and speak up in their communities, is affected by government and organizational decisions. Youth from a multiplicity of cultural and economic backgrounds, geographical areas, abilities, etc... must have the opportunity to articulate their own concerns. Adults need to:

- Know which youth communities² are marginalized or not being heard.
- Create mechanisms to connect with marginalized youth communities.

² A youth community can be defined as a population of youth who share backgrounds, situations, or lifestyles with common concerns, i.e. ethnic background, socio-economic background, geographical area (rural, for example), lesbian or gay youth, etc.

- Recognize and validate different learning styles by employing multiple strategies to engage youth in governance.

Scheduling and transportation

Lack of transportation, busy schedules, commitments to school, work and extra-curricular activities can be barriers to youth participation. Youth and adults will inevitably have different scheduling and transportation demands. Adults need to be flexible and give youth equal consideration in planning board meetings and activities:

- Provide transportation or public transport vouchers.
- Schedule meetings and activities to accommodate youth.
- Provide child care for youth with children.
- Partner with schools so that young people can earn credit for participation during school hours.

Adult capacity

Building adult capacity to work with youth requires both internal (team effort) and external (connect with youth-serving organizations) support networks, which enable adults to talk about their fears and challenges, and to develop their skills and competencies in working with youth. Adults need to develop sensitivity “to the inherent difference in experience, status, power, control, knowledge of resources, language, etc...” between youth and adults (Australian Youth Foundation, 1998, p.4). Building adult capacity requires:

- Adult understanding of youth culture - working with youth in authentic and meaningful ways
- Adopting youth-friendly language, and operations
- Building participatory skills, i.e. relationship building, communication

Youth capacity

Helping youth develop a positive identity, and realize their potential to participate in decision-making is key to building youth capacity. Many youth don't recognize their right to participate in processes and decisions that affect them. Youth need to gain confidence in their right to share decision-making with adults. They also need to build their participatory capacity. Building youth capacity requires:

- An adult mentor who can consistently “be there” for youth.
- Self-discovery, confidence building.
- Participatory skills development, i.e. communications.
- Orientation to the organization, board, program, council, etc...
- Opportunities to evaluate and celebrate their contributions.

Continuity of youth participation

Youth lives are constantly changing and youth are often in transition from high school to post-secondary education, from school to work, from living at home to living on their own, etc. Adults should not expect that particular young people will continue for a long time (K. Naylor, personal communications, August 2nd, 2005). Strategies and support systems to accommodate youth turnover include:

- A consistent, paid adult or youth coordinator.
- Established networks for “recruiting” youth.
- Youth-led training during youth turnover transitions.
- A system for recording and passing on learning and information.

Healthy Youth-Adult Partnerships

Healthy youth-adult partnerships are based on caring, respectful non-hierarchical relationships in which leadership and decision-making power are shared. Adults should strive to create a balance between providing direction and making space for youth initiative and action.

- Share roles and responsibilities
- Youth have equal opportunity to share their opinions and ideas
- Youth voice is given equal consideration
- Time is set aside to play together and team-build
- Youth contributions are regularly celebrated.

Meaningful Contribution

Mayor Nancy Bates, Farmington Hills, Michigan: ...before you involve young people, you better be clear in your mind why you're doing it ... Their involvement has to be meaningful. You can't fool young people for very long. If you don't mean it, and you don't sincerely want them at the table, they're going to figure it out. (National League of Cities, 2002)

- Youth identify key areas of concern
- Youth are meeting a genuine need – their contributions make a difference
- Participation is linked to first-hand experience, rooted in local spaces and places
- Participation offers youth a challenge, adventure, and new learning
- Youth contributions are recognized and celebrated by an outside community
- Youth feel a sense of accomplishment
- Youth return to the program or process and more youth join

Youth participation is institutionalized

Institutionalization means that “local governments champion the inclusion of children and youth as routine practice” (EYA & IICRD, 2004, p. 52).

- Municipalities establish a “Local Government Plan of Action”
- Youth on boards have the right to vote
- Youth are paid employees of city planning and development departments
- Formal political rights are extended to young people, i.e. voting age is lowered to 16
- Policies require a direct relationship between governments and youth
- Percentage of municipal budget (not subject to cuts) is allocated to youth participation

Public relations

Media images and stories of youth often portray youth as problems or “issues” in their communities, rather than valuable assets and contributing citizens. Positive media coverage of youth can break down negative youth stereotypes, increase public and governmental support of youth participation in governance, and encourage more youth to participate.

- Outreach to, and build positive relationships with local media
- Invite media to cover stories about youth contributions to community or governance
- Lobby for a weekly column on youth in the newspaper (or show on television or radio)

Stable Environment

“Effective youth participation needs a comfortable and protected environment in which it can continuously develop” (Golombek, S., 2002, p. 48).

- Core budget to support youth initiatives and operations
- Funding is consistent and renewable over the long-term (at least five years)
- Consistent, paid mentor who supports youth
- Youth have access to material and human resources of organization or department

Evaluation

Regular evaluation of youth participatory processes is necessary to provide evidence of the positive outcomes of engaging youth in decision-making and to learn more about effective and ineffective practices so that programs may be strengthened or restructured (United Nations, 2004).

- Have a systemic approach to documenting, evaluating, integrating, and replicating successful participatory processes.
- Include youth as evaluators and developers of evaluation processes.

VII. Recommendations

HRM is in a great position to begin establishing structures, programs and projects that integrate youth participation in governance. The work that has been completed by young people and adults in the development of HRM Recreation Tourism and Culture's Youth Engagement Strategy can potentially pave the way for an HRM-wide youth inclusion strategy. Further, the Building Strong Communities Initiative currently underway is based on principles of the contribution and participation of *all* citizens and building face-to-face relationships between governments, citizens, and community groups. Therefore, the success of this initiative necessitates the active engagement of youth. This could be well-facilitated by integrating the Youth Engagement Strategy into the Building Strong Communities Strategy. Any efforts that HRM takes to more widely integrate youth into governance structures and processes will do well by building upon and learning from this Youth Engagement Strategy and the other youth participation initiatives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and North America which are highlighted in this literature review.

Introduction

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has a vision of a healthy, sustainable, thriving community. The foundation of this vision is the active engagement of all its members. Through its implementation of the Youth Engagement Strategy, the HRM Recreation, Tourism, and Culture Department (RTC) has learned that young people must be included in community decision-making and planning toward HRM's vision. No longer should youth be excluded from the definition of "the public".

To this end, HRM has called for a literature review that highlights strategies and best practices of youth engagement in governance. This document will help guide HRM as it creates an inclusive, sustainable strategy to bring young people to the decision-making "table".

Defining the terms

In the literature, there are many definitions for the terms youth, participation, and governance. In practice, youth participation in governance happens differently depending on the situation and the structure in which it occurs. The following definitions are based on other literature and are articulated here to clarify a working definition of youth participation in governance for this literature review:

Youth ***participation*** means that youth are active in the "decision-making processes on issues that affect them" (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2004, *Young People's Participation is Valuable*, Para. 1). They take on meaningful roles in addressing matters of relevance to them and they influence real outcomes. They promote their own best interests and have greater control over their lives (UN Economic and Social Affairs, 2003; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2004). Some of the youth relevant environments from which youth participation has been excluded are education, health services, residential homes, the juvenile justice system, media, youth services, workplaces, local, provincial, and national governments.

Governance is the responsibility for directing the decision-making and policies of an organization or a municipality. Youth participation in governance is different than youth participating in a program, volunteering, or contributing service to an organization, or community. While these activities are also important, youth in governance implies *power sharing* between adults and youth and requires that youth have equitable access to the decision-making processes that affect their lives, their communities, and matters of importance or interest to them (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2004). Thus, in this review, youth participation in governance means youth have equitable access to and play an active role in making decisions, setting policies, and influencing outcomes on matters relevant to their lives at the municipal, organizational, and program level. Youth is defined as the stage of life between ten and nineteen years of age.

There are a variety of ways in which youth can participate in governance. Youth councils and youth representation on boards are most commonly associated with youth governance. However, youth friendly cities which exemplify best practices of youth participation utilize a wider diversity of mechanisms (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2000). This literature review will explore the following: youth action teams, youth-run

programs, youth-run organizations, research and consultation, youth advisory councils, and youth on boards. It is divided into the following six sections:

1. Rationale for engaging youth in local governance and community decision-making.
2. Strategies for engaging youth in local governance.
3. Indicators of successful youth participation in governance.
4. Local initiatives for youth participation in governance.
5. Conclusion
6. Appendices A through F (a list of resources and tools for municipalities, institutions and organizations, which work with or serve youth and want to increase youth engagement in governance, decision-making, policy formation, and/or planning)

1. Rationale for engaging youth in local governance and community decision-making

Youth are active and contributing members of society *now*, not future citizens or leaders of tomorrow, as they are referred to by many adult leaders. Nationwide research funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (2000) revealed one of the most consistent youth concerns is that youth voices are not heard, respected, or taken seriously by adults. In a Health Canada Report, 51% of teenagers said they were rarely or *never* listened to (2001). Young people in HRM have said "... youth should have a say in the things that happen in the neighbourhood.... [governments should]...talk to the youth, see what they want and look into it more [and] come to our schools and ask us our opinions and involve us in community meetings" (Growing up In Cities Canada research, January, 2005). Youth in rural Nova Scotia are echoing the same sentiment: "Youth really want to be involved, that's the whole point that we are trying to get to. Let us be involved. Let us be a part of your town" (Levy, as cited in Siegbahn, C., 2001, p. 1). The strong desire of youth to participate is the most compelling rationale for engaging youth in governance. The following four points provide further justification for youth participation.

a. Municipalities have a legal obligation to engage youth.

Children and young people are not passive participants in the life of society and towns and cities...[they are] fully-fledged citizens...[and] may therefore participate in the life of the community, in particular through advisory services for children and young people at a municipal level. (UNESCO, 1996, section II4)

International conventions, programs, and strategies have precipitated a growing awareness of the importance of youth participation in decision-making and governance. One of the most important was the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, to ensure young people's rights to participation, provision, and protection. The Convention is the most universally supported human rights treaty in history. Almost all countries, including Canada, have ratified the CRC. Stated in Article 12 of the Convention, children (0 to 18 years) have a right to express their views freely, and fully participate in all matters that affect them (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

Other major international milestones that have built political will for youth governance in community decision-making include:

- Chapter 25 of Agenda 21, signed by world leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit
- Habitat II, the 1996 UN Conference on Human Settlements
- The UN's World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond
- A World Fit for Children, adopted by 180 nations at the 2002 UN special session on Children

In response to these international milestones, the Government of Canada released its own plan, A Canada Fit for Children in 2004. The plan states that all children, as valued members of society, have the right to participate and contribute to their communities. It

recognizes that child and youth participation in decision-making results in more equitable policies and sustainable outcomes, and ensures that children and youth will have opportunities to participate in civic life (Government of Canada, 2004).

Youth have a fundamental human right to fully participate in matters that affect them. The strategies and conventions described above outline the legal imperatives for municipalities to create strategies which enable meaningful, sustainable youth participation in community governance. International and national commitments to youth will only be fully realized when they are rooted in communities, “in the lived experiences, spaces and places that children inhabit” (International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004, p. 52).

b. Benefits to youth and communities

The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible, and achieve it, generation after generation. Pearl S. Buck

Research shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities are less likely to engage in risky behaviour. They tend to have higher self-esteem, be more physically active, show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities, and are more likely to achieve healthy development (United Nations, 2004; National League of Cities, no date; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2000; International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003).

It is by questioning; expressing their views and having their opinions taken seriously that young people develop skills, build competencies, acquire confidence and form aspirations. It is a virtuous circle. The more opportunities a young person has for meaningful participation, the more experienced and competent he or she becomes. This allows more effective participation, which in turn enhances [his/her] development (United Nations, 2004, p. 276).

In addition, relationship building is crucial for the healthy development of youth. Recognizing youth as community assets and including them in decision-making enables youth to build meaningful relationships with adults and each other. Too often, negative experiences, societal stereotypes, and false assumptions result in misunderstanding between youth and adults (Brown, J., Haid, P., & Marques, E.D., 1999). When youth and adults share decision-making about affairs usually dominated by adults, intergenerational relationships are strengthened. Shared decision-making also builds bridges between the needs and interests of adults and youth, leading to more inclusive and sustainable community development (Geggie, L., 2003).

Finally, young people’s energy, creativity, unique perspectives, and propensity for action lead to positive, beneficial change in organizations, communities and nations (Lang Lois, M., 2005). According to Mayor Nancy Bates of Farmington Hills, Virginia, youth are

... a whole resource out there that we’re not touching ... [they’re] bright, they’re articulate, and they’re positive ... [they] have good ideas, and they have perspectives that adults don’t have and a lot of energy. A lot of intergenerational activity is very constructive for the community” (National League of Cities, 2002).

Historically, youth energy and initiative have been the building blocks of international and national reform movements, i.e. antinuclear, environment, gay and lesbian rights (Lui, J., 2003; Carpini, M., no date). At the community level, youth initiatives have addressed issues such as safety, health, public transport, and parks and recreation. For example, in response to a car accident which killed a student near a high school in Farmington Hills, Michigan, students created a video for city council requesting stoplight changes in the high school area. As a result, the council approved changes to improve the traffic safety near the high school.

c. Benefits for municipal governments and the health of democracy

No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General (United Nations, 2004, p. 271)

Municipal leaders regularly make decisions, shape policies and take action on issues that directly affect youth, i.e. public transport, parks and recreation, use of public spaces, health, child care, education, housing, etc... Unfortunately, young people lack access to the official avenues (i.e. voting, courts, trade unions, etc...) through which adults can give their input to governments. Yet, youth are the experts on their experiences, needs, and interactions with their local environments. If governments do not engage youth, well-intentioned programs and policies for youth are more likely to fail.

For example, many governments want to improve education for children and youth, but, when designing programs or making policies to “improve” education, do not ask students for input regarding effective teaching methods, or factors contributing to school dropout rates. Municipalities and organizations that actually engage youth in decision-making processes will make decisions that are more responsive and appropriate to youth needs and interests. Ultimately, this means wiser investments and youth policies and programs that are more effective and sustainable.

A healthy democracy requires citizen engagement and trust and cooperation between governments and people. If youth voices fall on deaf ears and they are marginalized from community affairs, they are more likely to become apathetic citizens and cynical towards governments. However, if youth are invited to share their views, to participate in decision-making, and to contribute to the creation of their communities, they are more likely to feel trust in their governments and be active citizens.

Only by experiencing respect for their views and discovering the importance of respecting the views of others will youth acquire the capacity and willingness to listen and so begin to understand the processes and value of democracy. (United Nations, 2004, p. 277)

Most civic habits develop between the midteens and the early twenties. Thus, youth participation in governance will increase the probability of citizen engagement in adulthood, and over time will increase overall rates of participation (Carpini, M., no date).

d. Youth engagement in governance is sound professional practice

Over the decades of 1960 to 2000, youth serving organizations have shifted from focusing on youth deficits and working *on* or *for* young people to solve their problems, to focusing on youth assets and partnering *with* youth to build “positive futures for themselves, communities and society” (Langlois, M., 2005; Pittman, K., 2000; HeartWood, <http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/approach.shtml>, para 2). This shift has changed the way that youth organizations do business. Youth development organizations now give young people

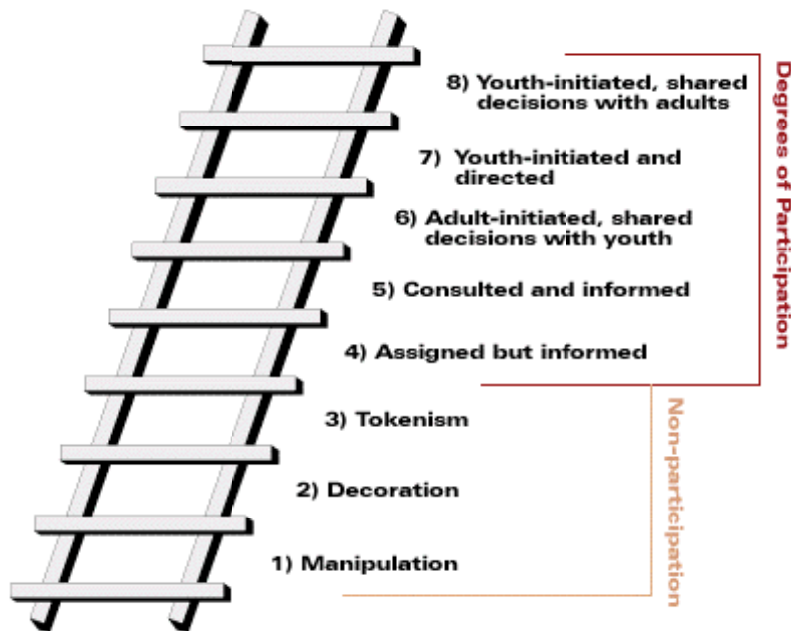
...more meaningful choices and roles in the activities in which they are involved, shifting from receiving knowledge to creating knowledge and from being service recipients to being program planners and deliverers ... the commitment to youth participation translates into an organizational commitment to involve young people in all aspects of decision-making – from programming to fund development to personnel to governance. (Pittman, K., Irby, M., Tolman, J., et al., 2003, p.7)

As a result, youth-serving organizations are increasingly evaluated by their capacity to achieve participatory involvement, decision-making and leadership *with* youth, rather than their ability to deliver services *to* youth (Milburn, 2000). Municipal departments and youth-serving organizations, especially those whose activities directly impact youth (i.e. police, justice, social care, health care, recreation departments, environmental departments, etc.), will be expected to integrate these practices into their work. The following section describes six strategies for integrating decision-making and partnership *with* youth into municipal structures and processes. Each of these strategies provides meaningful opportunities for youth to engage in local governance.

2. Strategies for engaging youth in local governance

This section outlines six strategies, including formal government structures and less formal processes, for engaging youth in governance. These strategies are: research and consultation, youth advisory boards, youth representation on boards, local action projects, youth-run programs and youth-run organizations.

The quality and efficacy of any of these strategies can be determined by the *authenticity* and *degree* of youth participation. Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation can be used to measure the authenticity and degree of youth participation.



Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation, adapted from *Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship*, UNICEF (McCreary Centre Society, 2000, <http://www.mcs.bc.ca/vps/home.htm>).

The first three rungs of the ladder describe non-participation - adults may consult or involve youth, but youth do not actually have an opportunity to authentically participate or meaningfully contribute. Typically, non-participation benefits adults because “it looks good” to include youth, while doing little to benefit youth. The top five rungs represent increasing degrees of youth participation.

8) *Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults* are when projects or programs are initiated by youth and decision-making is shared among youth and adults. These projects empower youth while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

7) *Youth-initiated and directed* is when young people initiate and direct a project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.

6) *Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth* are when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the young people.

5) *Consulted and informed* is when youth give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The youth are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.

4) *Assigned but informed* is where youth are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.

3) *Tokenism* is where young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

2) *Decoration* is where young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by youth.

1) *Manipulation* is where adults use youth to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by youth (McCreary Centre Society, 2005, Youth Participation, Para. 2- 9).

Roger Hart's ladder is only one of many evaluative tools for youth participation. The HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development³ and The FreeChild Project⁴ has developed similar tools to "measure" youth participation. HeartWood's "Levels of Youth Inclusion ... shows youth taking on progressively greater challenges in an organization", from "program participation", i.e. participants in a recreation program to "youth-driven", i.e. a youth-governed drop-in centre (HeartWood & Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2002). HeartWood believes that all levels of participation are equally important for youth development. As organizations gain confidence and experience in including youth, they can increase their levels of youth inclusion, and as youth develop confidence in their skills and decision-making abilities, they can take on greater challenges within an organization (HeartWood & Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2002).

The FreeChild Project adapted a "Measure for Social Change By and With Young People" from Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation (<http://www.freechild.org/measure.htm>). In contrast to the ladder, their measure is a non-linear spiral to represent the continually evolving process of social change and to show

³ HeartWood works with youth to develop their skills and confidence as community builders. They train and support adults, young adults and agencies in the skills and tools they require to support meaningfully youth participation in building healthy communities (<http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/main.shtml>)

⁴ The Freechild Project seeks to advocate, inform, and celebrate social change led by and with young people around the world, particularly those who have been historically denied the right to participate (<http://www.freechild.org/aboutus.htm>)

that social change does not start in one place and end in another. The most optimal position on their spiral is when every person within a community is equally included in decision-making and taking action. FreeChild deliberately excludes manipulation, decoration, and tokenism from their spiral because they want to discourage language that promotes working “for the youth” or doing “to the children”.

Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation has been chosen as a reference in this literature review because the degrees of participation clearly define what is and is not youth participation in governance. In the context of this review’s definition of youth participation⁵, youth are most engaged at degree 6 - “adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth”, 7 – “youth initiated and directed”, or 8 – “youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults”, and least engaged at degrees 1, 2, and 3 on Roger Hart’s ladder, manipulation, decoration or tokenism.

Each of the following strategies will be introduced with a table which outlines a brief description, best practice characteristics, an example within North America, and the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy. Best practice characteristics are defined as those that involve youth participation at degree 6, 7, or 8 on Roger Hart’s Ladder.

Research and consultation

Strategy Description	Best practices	Example	Strengths	Weaknesses
Variety of approaches, from adult or youth-led consultation research, i.e. surveys, focus groups, dialogue sessions, interviews to adult or youth directed participatory action research, i.e. community asset mapping.	-All research leads to change! -A diversity of youth is included. -Participatory action approach -If using consultative approach on-going consultation and follow-up with youth occurs, and youth are involved in actions that result.	Environmental Youth Alliance Community Asset Mapping*, Vancouver, BC	Helps organizations and governments, which may not have the capacity to engage youth onsite but who want to make better decisions that lead to more sustainable and effective youth policies and programs.	-Organizations and governments are often on limited timeframes to complete research, which can easily lead to research processes that are token rather than participatory. -Data can be used to serve agendas that don’t address youth needs.

*<http://www.eya.ca>; <http://www.eya.ca/youthmappers>

Research with youth helps governments and organizations make better decisions regarding city planning, education, programming, employment, etc... Styles of research with youth range from consultative to participatory approaches.

Consultative approaches, including interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys, typically involve an outside organization or municipality consulting with youth on a pre-determined topic, i.e. health issues such as teen pregnancy or drug use.

⁵ Youth participation in governance - youth have equitable access to and play an active role in making decisions, setting policies, and influencing outcomes on matters relevant to their lives at the municipal, organizational, and program level.

Consultations have a reputation for being used to justify pre-determined programs or projects that serve adult agendas rather than youth needs (C. Dumond, personal communications, July 29th, 2005). These “one-off consultations” can leave youth feeling cynical of their capacity to effect change and erode their trust in adult authorities (Lui, J., 2003, p. 1). For effective consultations, researchers should ensure that the research question is relevant and matters to youth, that youth are informed about why they are being consulted, how their input will be used, and the outcomes of their input, that follow-up sessions are arranged to verify the data, and that youth are involved in the resultant actions: “We should get to hear back within a reasonable timeframe and we should be taken seriously. If there’s no changes and we don’t hear back then it is a token youth involvement effort” (Lui, J., 2003, p. 7).

In the past year, HRM Recreation, Tourism and Culture have effectively engaged youth in consultations as part of the Youth Engagement Strategy. They have utilized diverse tools - dialogue sessions, asset mapping, and surveys - and in some cases, youth have conducted the research. The importance of consultation follow-ups with youth was highlighted by a World Café⁶ facilitated by the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development and HRM RTC at the Captain William Spry Centre in May, 2005. At the Café, fifty or sixty youth (from the Mainland South region) said that they wanted a skate park in their community. However, when the facilitators followed-up with a smaller group of youth after the World Café, they found that many of these youth don’t skateboard (J. Ure, personal communications, July 29th, 2005). They simply want more informal gathering spots for youth, like skate parks provide for skaters. Had HRM RTC not followed-up, they may have concluded that most of the youth who attended the dialogue session want a skate park, and eliminated a more common youth need – gathering spots!

Unlike consultations in which youth are objects of the research, participatory action research (PAR) places more power in the hands of youth: youth are key decision-makers in the research process, supported by people who have research experience (Dumond, C., Moody, R., & Van Wagner, E., 2004). They help identify the problem, shape the research design, collect and analyze the data, and have ownership of the research. The PAR process generally engages fewer youth, and requires more time and funding than consultative processes, but promotes more meaningful youth participation in the research (C. Dumond, personal communications, July 29th, 2005).

Community asset mapping is one example of participatory action research and has been used successfully by municipalities around the world to engage youth in local government.

Mapping...enables children and youth to create visual representations of themselves and their communities through images and text. Through mapmaking, information gathered is used to address and resolve specific local, social, economic and environmental challenges relevant to children and youth in their communities. Maps provide an accessible tool with which to gather perspectives and mobilize children and youth to influence decisions that impact their communities (IICRD & EYA, 2004, p. 58).

⁶ A World Café is a tool used throughout the world to draw community members together for a dialogue about important issues faced by those in attendance. The method used is that of simple dialogue circles.

In Detroit, Michigan, as a result of the Community Youth Mapping project, youth are able to access information on youth friendly activities and spaces in their city, and print maps on how to access these spaces from computer kiosks in public libraries. Detroit's Youth Services Division hires youth to maintain and analyze the data collected through the project (National League of Cities, no date).

In Columbus, Indiana, youth collected and mapped information on youth service providers in their town, and discovered that the quality of youth service needed improvement. At a town meeting, they presented their findings, requested more quality youth services, and recommended regular media coverage of positive youth activities. As a result, the town paper started a column highlighting youth contributions to the community (National League of Cities, no date).

Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA)⁷, a youth-driven organization in Vancouver, BC, is recognized as a leader in community asset mapping research with youth (K. Naylor, personal communications, August 2nd, 2005). Through their Youth Community Asset Mapping (YCAM) project, EYA has engaged youth in participatory action research on issues including health, city planning, and peer education. For example, for Vancouver's Regional Planning Community Consultation process YCAM trained and supported the Collingwood Renfrew Youth Mapping Educators (CRYME) to map the parks in their neighbourhoods, and present the results to the Parks Board of Vancouver (EYA, 2002). CRYME will complete the same process for the recreation, transportation, and school boards. Please see Appendix A for other research and consultation resources.

Youth on Boards

Strategy Description	Best practices	Example	Strengths	Weaknesses
Youth representation on municipal or organizational boards of directors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Youth are 25%+ of total -Youth have voting rights -Equal contribution from youth and adult members -Well-defined roles and responsibilities for youth -Opportunities for youth to see the results of their time and energy (outside of meetings and discussions) -Outreach to a diversity of youth 	Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth Project, Halifax, NS*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Youth have direct interaction with adult decision-makers, -Given full voting rights, they have power to directly influence outcomes -Adults get direct feedback from youth they are trying to benefit -Youth voice offers fresh perspectives and unique insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Structure unappealing to many youth – engages only a small % of youth -Often not inclusive of a diversity of youth -Easily token -Policies hinder youth decision-making power -Youth don't always see tangible results

*<http://www.youthproject.ns.ca/>

⁷ EYA is a community development organization, dedicated to improving both physical and social environments through hands on community projects that involve, train, and employ young people (<http://www.eya.ca/index.php?id=24>)

Youth on boards refers to youth representation on governmental and organizational boards of directors. This strategy for youth participation is most effective when at least 25% of board members are youth; adults and youth collaborate to define specific youth roles and responsibilities which best utilize their skills and talents; decision-making, planning and work is shared equitably between youth and adult board members; and youth have full voting rights (At the Table, <http://www.atthetable.org/resources.asp>).

The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Project (LGBYP) in Halifax, NS exemplify many of these practices in their board structure. LGBYP is comprised of the board of directors, which has 25% youth representation, and the youth board. On the board of directors, youth and adults share responsibility for budgeting, policy-making, legal and financial projects. The youth board defines programs and services. They have their own budget, develop their own code of conduct and youth policies, decide which projects they will develop, which social events they will coordinate, and who they will hire (S. Jamieson, personal communications, July 29th, 2005). The youth board works to maintain transparency in their operations and to ensure that decisions are coming from the broader youth community served by LGBYP. They maintain a mailing list, and do regular surveys and needs assessments. They make it easy for youth to join (there isn't a lengthy application or initiation process or a large fee), and provide different opportunities for youth to contribute their time, energy and skills. For example, if the youth board decides to coordinate a prom, they will invite other youth to decide on the location, name, theme, etc.

Genuine youth participation on boards is difficult. If youth representation on a board is less than 25%, youth aren't granted voting rights, and adult members lack youth-friendly attitudes and skills, youth participation will easily become token (C. Malone, personal communications, August 3rd, 2005; S. Jamieson, personal communications, July 28th, 2005). It is extremely difficult for one young person to "have a say" among a group of adults who are not skilled in youth inclusion. Provincial laws and bylaws may restrict youth vote on boards. These laws can be changed but it takes considerable time and energy⁸.

Even when effective practices are in place, the nature of board priorities may not always allow equal opportunities for youth contributions, i.e. discussing financial matters, and youth don't always see tangible results of their time and energy. It is the responsibility of adults to keep up youth morale by providing time and space for youth to achieve tangible outcomes (S. Jamieson, personal communications, July 29th, 2005).

Despite its weaknesses, this strategy for participation in governance provides youth direct interaction with adult leaders, and given full voting rights, the power to directly influence decisions, policies, and future directions of a municipality or organization. With youth representatives on boards, adults get direct opinions from the people they are trying to benefit, and youth have an increased sense of ownership over decisions and outcomes (S. Jamieson, personal communication, July 29th, 2005). For other resources, re: youth on boards, see Appendix B.

⁸ 15 year old Ben Smilowitz from Connecticut, USA founded the International Student Activism Alliance, and led a two year campaign that succeeded in changing the Connecticut state law to allow for student seats on school boards (Hoover, A.B., & Weisenbach, A., 1999).

Youth advisory councils

Strategy Description	Best practices	Example	Strengths	Weaknesses
A council made up of youth members, who represent and advocate for youth needs in their community to a governing body, i.e. city council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Direct linkage to power -Youth and governments become partners -Core funding -Resource supports -Longevity of council -Specific roles and responsibilities for youth -Engage youth from a broad spectrum -Consistent mentor 	<p>Toronto Youth Cabinet, Toronto, Ontario*</p> <p>Youth Advisory Council to the Nova Scotia Youth Secretariat** (see section 4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Publicly legitimizes youth voice -Gives youth a greater capacity to directly influence planning and decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Structure unappealing to many youth -Typically not inclusive of a broad diversity of youth -Risk of token councils -Can be discouraging for youth, when their suggestions aren't realized or progress happens SLOWLY!

*http://www.torontoyouth.com/youth_cabinet/index.php

** <http://youth.ednet.ns.ca/council/council.htm>

Youth advisory councils (YAC) inform city councils and departments about the needs and interests of youth. For YACs to succeed in influencing policy and decision-making, they need structure and stability, i.e. a budget, funding, resources, workspace; youth training; a full-time paid youth or adult support person; continuity of youth involvement, linkage to power, i.e. regular opportunities to directly address city council; long-term standing in the community, paid positions and representation of a cross section of youth in the community (Geggie, L., 2003; S. Hansen, Toronto Youth Cabinet, personal communications, July 29th, 2005; Youth Opportunities Assessment Project, no date). The two most essential elements for the success and longevity of YAC's are consistent funding, and a "committed adult with the power and consistency to continue the process beyond the changes in electoral platforms" (S. Hansen, personal communications, July 29th, 2005; Price, M.E., 2004; Youth Opportunities Assessment Project, no date).

The Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC) is an example of a youth advisory council (Lui, J., 2003; Geggie, L., 2003; EYA & IICRD, 2004). The TYC's volunteer members are mostly high school students, but range in age from 13 to 25 (S. Hansen, personal communications, July 29th, 2005). They are advocates for Toronto youth, and advise city councilors on a variety of youth issues including affordable housing, public transit, youth programs and access to recreational and public space (TYC, www.torontoyouth.com/youth_cabinet).

Following the shooting of 17 youth in downtown Toronto in 2003, the TYC launched "Recreation not Ammunition", an initiative to get more funding for recreation centres and programming for youth in low income areas. The city funded a new recreation centre, but they did not build it in the low-income areas most in need. In another initiative, the TYC coordinated the Homeless Youth Forum in response to the city's proposal to close down Eva's Phoenix Youth Shelter to extend the waterfront. TYC outreached to all the youth shelters in danger of being shut down, and invited them to come out and discuss

their concerns. They invited media, documented the discussions, and brought the results to city council, asking for 10% of all affordable housing units to be designated for youth. Again, their requests were only half heard. The city approved a new shelter, but did not grant the 10% allocation for which TYC asked.

While the TYC has been successful in many of its initiatives, they still don't have regular and direct contact with city council. Instead, a city council member speaks on behalf of the youth. TYC member Stefany Hansen would like to see a commitment from the mayor and city council to meet with youth directly on a monthly basis. She asserts:

As city becomes more open and more willing to listen and take in our ideas, we'll become more "real"...our success depends on the city evolving and progressing... the more the city becomes open to listening to youth voice, hearing and validating it through the creation of legislation and policy that directly [supports] what the youth have said [the more effective we'll be] (S. Hansen, personal communications, July 29th, 2005).

In Virginia, Hampton's (<http://www.hampton.gov/youth/gametime/getinvolved.html>) Youth Commission has a \$75 000 annual budget. The Commission advocates youth needs to city council, other municipal departments, and community groups, and grants funds to community youth initiatives. The Commission liaises with the planning department, which hires and pays two youth as staff, and the Neighbourhood Advisory Board - NAB:

...if we're dealing with an issue at the youth commission level and we say we really want to get a feel, kind of a pulse for the kids in the community, we just shoot it over to the Neighbourhood Youth Advisory Board. And they've got their hands on hundreds of kids who are their peers in the neighbourhood, and we can get good feedback from them (Cindy Carlson, Director of Youth Services, Hampton Virginia in National League of Cities, 2002).

Port Hope, Ontario is developing an "intricate mapping of intentional youth development" so that by the time youth are 18, they've had some influence in decision-making (B. Whitehead, personal communications, August 2nd, 2005). They have a youth advisory committee specifically for Parks, Recreation and Culture, one youth representative on city council every school year (non-voting member), a county wide youth advisory council (serving seven municipalities), and TEAM Youth Engagement Strategy. The youth advisory committee (YAC) is a mix of adults and youth, who give advice and make recommendations to Parks and Recreation for city council to consider, i.e. a community skate park. In Port Hope's experience, unless adults are at the table with youth, youth don't have a voice, so the YAC advises Parks and Recreation staff and the staff members advise city council. The county wide youth advisory council consists of one youth representative from each municipality, one youth from each of the six high schools in the county, five youth from youth serving agencies (including Port Hope's Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture), and an adult "consulting team" of five that provides some direction. The TEAM youth engagement strategy is a volunteer opportunity for youth between the ages of 13 and 18 to work (with an adult coordinator) on developing programs and services for youth. Brenda Whitehead, (Program Manager, Port Hope Parks, Recreation, and Culture), attests to the necessity of a full-time youth coordinator, who understands youth development, and is hired to focus specifically on community youth engagement (personal communications, August 2nd, 2005). She argues

that programmers are too busy running programs and dealing with centre operations to champion the success of youth participation in governance and decision-making.

As with youth representation on boards, advisory councils typically reach only a small percentage of the youth population, often those who are academically inclined or already in similar leadership positions. YACs also run the risk of being token symbols of youth engagement that serve to make city council “look good”. Two of the greatest challenges of a youth advisory council are engaging youth from a broad spectrum of communities, and developing a direct relationship between youth and government (S. Hansen, personal communications, July 29th, 2005). However, given best practice models of youth advisory councils, including effective youth outreach strategies and direct and regular meetings with city councilors and mayors, YACs give youth a greater capacity to have input and make change at the city government level. YACs that serve altruistic, rather than token purposes legitimize youth voice and ensure youth participation in the community planning and decision-making process. For more information and resources on youth councils, see Appendix C.

Local Action Projects

Strategy Description	Best practices	Example	Strengths	Weaknesses
Meaningful initiatives that aim to change some aspect of, or contribute something beneficial to the community.	Locally based, inclusive participation, youth identified, collaboration between youth, adults, and organizations or municipalities	HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development Youth Action Team Approach* Spryfield Youth Action Team** (see section 4)	-Hands-on, action oriented, and tangible results -Connects youth to their local environment -Capacity to engage a larger # and broader diversity of youth -Promotes civic engagement of adults and youth	-Depending on the nature of the project, youth access to power or decision-making structures may be limited. -Need to plan for youth turnover -Difficult to engage supportive adults

*<http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/approach.shtml>

**<http://users.eastlink.ca/~msthcyat/yat-activities.htm>

Local action projects are meaningful initiatives generated by groups or individuals that aim to change some aspect of, or contribute something beneficial to the community (Geggie, L., 2003). Groundworks (<http://www.gworks.ca/site/>), an organization that has been working with youth in policy for over 12 years, believes that youth who participate in local action projects have a greater influence on decision-making and policies, and a greater impact on their communities than in any other forum of participation (Geggie, L., 2003).

For example, in 1996, LifeCycles youth organization, in Victoria, BC, was working with a neighbourhood group to create a community garden. They wanted to develop a community garden in a local park but the Victoria Parks Department didn’t allow gardening in its parks. So, youth from Lifecycles and adults from the neighbourhood group worked collaboratively to lobby City Council and the Parks Department to change

this policy. They succeeded and now, gardening is recognized as a legitimate parks activity in Victoria.

In Shelburne, Nova Scotia, local adults and staff from the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development mentored youth in the development of a skatepark in their community. Youth in Shelburne had been trying to get a skate park since 1990, but adults in the community were very resistant to the idea. With the guidance of HeartWood and Shelburne's Youth Wellness Centre, the youth planned a door-to-door skate to collect food donations, increase awareness about youth and skateboarding, and improve public perceptions of youth and skateboarders. Then, with the help of staff at the Youth Wellness Centre, youth developed a skateboard park proposal and presented it to town council. Council granted public space for the skate park, and the town donated materials and funds to build the park.

Local action projects engage a larger number and broader diversity of youth than the more formal governance structures, i.e. youth councils, thus providing opportunities for a greater number of youth to impact city policy-making and effect social change. The hands-on nature of local action projects is appealing to young people's desire for action. When young people take positive action in their communities, they promote the civic engagement of adults as well as youth, and they create a community in which young people feel accepted and want to return. Youth who contribute to their communities in local action projects will more likely become adults who feel a sense of ownership of their communities.

However, local action projects do not regularly link youth with the people who have the power to make decisions which affect youth lives, i.e. administrators, mayors, program managers, etc. Thus, youth ability to influence municipal decision-making or policies through local action projects may be limited. Utilizing a combination of formal structures and youth action teams to engage youth in governance can ensure youth have direct links to power and that larger numbers and more diverse youth communities are engaged. For example, the youth council in Berlin-Reinickendorf, Germany created issue-oriented action groups to increase the numbers of young people involved (Golombek, S. 2002). The Youth Connections program at the United Way in Winnipeg, Manitoba is run by a youth council and funds youth driven projects that aim to change the public's perception of young people (Bridgman, R., 2004). The Hampton Youth Commission in Virginia has a yearly budget to grant money for youth-led community service projects (National League of Cities, 2002). See Appendix D for resources on youth engagement in community projects.

Youth-run programs

Strategy Description	Best practices	Example	Strengths	Weaknesses
Youth run a program or service delivered by an adult-led municipal department or community organization.	Youth design program, set policies for program, evaluate staff performance, and have decision-making power about budget spending, fundraising, and hiring staff	Youth Granting for Youth, The Muttart Foundation*, Edmonton, Alberta	Peer led initiatives shown to be really successful – youth often know how to create engaging programs for other youth better than adults do! Great opportunity for leadership development.	-Attracts leaders so need to work hard to ensure inclusion of a variety of youth -Often youth serving youth, not youth serving the community, and does not raise the profile of youth as equal members in a community

*<http://www.muttart.org/homeyouth.htm>

Youth run programs and services are generally formed in schools, recreation centres, and not-for-profit community organizations. A youth run program can be distinguished from other youth programs because youth have some or all of the following governance responsibilities: design of the program; development of policies and procedures related to youth participation in the program, spending and raising funds, and hiring staff (Laidlaw Foundation, 2002). The more responsibilities are granted, the greater the degree of youth participation in governance.

Youth-run programs tend to attract the naturally assertive and confident young people, so program coordinators should be as inclusive as possible in their youth outreach. Also, many youth-led programs are peer initiatives - youth working for youth. Youth initiatives which serve adults and the greater community are important to raise the profile of youth as equally contributing members in society, and to shift dominant cultural attitudes towards youth.

The Muttart Foundation's (<http://www.muttart.org/index.html>) Youth Granting for Youth allows youth tremendous decision-making power and influence on the outcomes of the program. Youth Granting for Youth flips the customary role of adults making decisions for youth on its head. Instead youth consider applications submitted by adults, have the final say in granting awards, and thus hold a primary role in shaping the programs and services available to them. There is an \$800 000 budget to be granted over 8 years, at a maximum of \$5000 per award, to charities and organizations doing great things for youth. A panel of youth between the ages of 12 and 18 make all decisions about granting funds, using three criteria: the level of youth involvement in developing the program, how the program benefits youth, and the organization's need for funding.

Exemplary youth run programs exist within the Halifax Regional Municipality. Capital Health provides funding for the establishment and maintenance of Youth Health Centres (YHC) at every high school in the Capital Health Region. Some of these centres have Peer Health Education programs, which support high school students in the design and delivery of health education workshops to junior high students. For example, at the Mainland South Youth Health Centre, the senior youth complete an annual needs

assessment with the junior high students to determine their learning needs. Based on the assessment, senior youth meet with the public health nurse and choose education topics and special guests to invite. Senior youth create the workshops and present them to the junior high students. Sheila Lane, formerly the public health nurse at the Mainland South Youth Health Centre (now in Fall River), identified the key elements for successful youth-run programs: youth take a leadership role in decision-making; senior youth educators pair up with new educators to provide continuity of training; the program is meaningful to youth and valued by the broader community; and youth feel a connection with the broader community (S. Lane, personal communications, August 2nd, 2005).

A youth run program is a versatile strategy for engaging youth in governance. Any organization or municipality that serves youth has the potential to increase the degree of youth participation in the design and delivery of its programs or services.

Youth- run organizations

Strategy Description	Best practices	Example	Strengths	Weaknesses
Youth are founding members, and directors of their own organization. Youth own all of the primary governance and decision-making power.	Youth hire staff, run their own meetings with no adults present, raise funds, develop budgets, and make decisions on expenditures. Support, while minimal, is key to the continuity and success of the organization. Inclusion of a diversity of youth backgrounds.	The Regional Multicultural Youth Council*, Thunder Bay, Ontario Youth Driven**, Environmental Youth, Vancouver, BC	-Youth have tremendous autonomy in decision-making, and build skills by figuring things out for themselves. -Connects youth with community. -Increases the capacity of youth to effect positive change in their communities.	-Youth involved tend to be those who have a lot of support at home and in the community, are already leaders, and involved in many different things. -Fewer opportunities for shared decision-making with adults. -Can struggle for funding, and continuity of project due to youth turnover.

*<http://my.tbaytel.net/manwoyc/>

**<http://www.eya.ca/index.php?id=16>

Youth-governed organizations differ from youth-run programs because youth are founding members and directors of the organization, and *all* of the primary governance and decision-making powers are in the hands of youth. Those that function best have consistent mentorship and support from an experienced adult or youth-serving organization, sustainable funding, a consistent working space, and an effective strategy to provide continuity as youth come and go.

One example is the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC), in Thunder Bay, Ontario, established in 1985. The council has 13 members between the ages of 14 and 18, fifty percent of whom are native or new immigrants. RMYC outreaches to youth in the small, isolated communities of Northwestern Ontario, promotes youth involvement in activities that foster their wellbeing, and develops programs that improve quality of life and social conditions in these communities, i.e. business and entrepreneur training, stay-

in-school initiatives, youth-to-youth leadership and development training, multicultural programs that celebrate diversity. Members of the RMYC also sit on various advisory boards, i.e. Thunder Bay City Council's Race Relations Committee. The council is given support, when needed, by the Executive Director of the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario, who provides advice and training on who's who in the community, how to write a proposal, effectively navigating bureaucracy, etc. Still, the youth run the organization with minimal support: they hire staff for their centre, run their own meetings, fundraise, and develop and allocate budgets.

Environmental Youth Alliance recognizes that youth-run organizations, despite their short lives, help youth gain the skills and capacity they need to guide their next steps in life and contribute to their communities. In collaboration with a partner organization, EYA facilitates Youth Driven, a coalition of youth-run organizations formed with the purpose of collectively building their capacity and the capacity of other youth in their communities to effect positive change. EYA also provides The Hub, a space open to youth-run organizations on an ongoing basis. In The Hub, youth can use computers, host meetings, ask questions, and utilize other resources they may need, including support from EYA staff.

When youth run their own organizations, they have ultimate responsibility for all of the primary governance and decision-making powers within their organization. Ideally, there is adult mentorship and support, but adults do not share the decision-making with youth. This strategy's strength is the freedom it gives youth to be autonomous and to figure things out independently.

Summary

During extensive research on youth participation in Canadian municipalities, the Division of Childhood & Adolescence, Public Health Agency of Canada hoped to identify a best practices model for youth participation. Instead, they found that the most successful examples incorporated a diversity of opportunities for youth participation at the ***local***, ***interagency***, and ***political*** levels (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2000). ***Local*** youth run initiatives, i.e. local action projects, are necessary because they provide youth with real, tangible, and meaningful issues in which they can be involved, and appeal to youths' desire for action. Youth-serving organizations (***interagency***) provide links between youth and their communities, and can support youth-run programs or youth-run organizations. Further, youth-serving organizations are "tapped into" youth populations from specific communities and have networking ability with a broad diversity of youth. The ***political*** level is necessary because it publicly legitimizes youth participation and increases youth access to power and financial resources.

This section has provided a brief overview of six different strategies for engaging youth in governance at the local (youth action teams, community asset mapping, participatory action research), interagency (youth-run programs and youth-run organizations) and political levels (youth advisory councils, youth on boards, youth consultations). This section supports the findings of the Public Health Agency of Canada - there is no one "right" way to promote or "blueprint" to develop youth participation. Every youth, community, and organization is unique and will have different needs and capacities to be engaged or to engage. Local governments committed to improving youth participation in governance in their municipalities should focus on the development of

multiple strategies for youth participation, including activities at a neighbourhood and community level as well as activities within formal government structures.

The next section outlines key indicators of success for youth engagement in governance. These indicators were developed through a review of the youth participation literature, interviews with youth who have meaningfully participated in governance, and adults who specialize in creating opportunities for youth engagement in decision-making.

3. Indicators of successful youth participation in governance

...focus on the promotion of participatory skills for all, not just leadership skills for the few. Leaders will always emerge, but all children and young people need the chance to learn the multiple skills of listening and collaborating in groups if they are to discover that they can play very different roles in building communities and achieving change (United Nations, 2004, pp. 286 & 287)

A thorough review of youth governance practices revealed that the most authentic, meaningful and active practices of youth participation share common elements of success, which can be referred to as success indicators. This section highlights eleven success indicators of youth participation in governance. Each indicator is followed by a checklist that can be used as a guide to help organizations and municipalities more effectively engage youth in governance. The indicators and their checklists are not exhaustive.

Inclusion

- Know which youth communities⁹ are marginalized or not being heard
- Create mechanisms to connect with marginalized youth communities
 - Network with representatives of many youth organizations, serving a diversity of youth from multiple backgrounds
 - Support young people to network with other youth not connected to organizations or institutions
 - Outreach at the neighbourhood level, not just to schools and other institutions
 - Go “where the rubber hits the road”, i.e. talk to youth in public places and informal settings
- Recognize and validate different learning styles by employing multiple strategies to engage youth in governance

A diversity of youth, not just the select group that tend to stand out and speak up in their communities, is affected by government and organizational decisions. The vast majority of kids whom adults may call “non-leaders” are disconnected for want of an experience or opportunity. Inclusion requires recognizing that every young person has something to contribute, and that a strong, healthy youth community has a real mix of intelligences and backgrounds. Youth from a multiplicity of cultural and economic backgrounds, geographical areas, abilities, etc... deserve the opportunity to articulate their own concerns.

Adults seeking to initiate contact with youth may naturally approach local schools or youth-serving organizations. This outreach strategy will miss youth who have dropped out of school, who are working, homeless, or disengaged from society. It may even youth who go to school in a less socially and economically advantaged area. Young people in the black community of North Dartmouth said, “They don’t tell all the youth in our community what goes on” (GUICC research, Halifax, NS, January, 2005). Inclusion

⁹ A youth community can be defined as a population of youth who share backgrounds, situations, or lifestyles with common concerns, i.e. ethnic background, socio-economic background, geographical area (rural, for example), lesbian or gay youth, etc.

requires knowing which youth communities are not being heard, i.e. disabled youth, First Nations youth, and creating mechanisms to connect with them. Marion Price of the Play Works Partnership¹⁰ suggests talking to youth “where the rubber hits the road - talk to young people standing on corners, at bus stops, or places they meet” (personal communications, July 22nd, 2005). The PACT project and the youth outreach strategy in Hampton, Virginia are two examples of such mechanisms.

The PACT research project in the City of York, England outreaches to youth with disabilities. City staff hires and trains young people as researchers to consult youth with disabilities about social policy issues, i.e. housing, transportation, and employment. The youth researchers collect the data, write it up, and present it to the city council for consideration, allowing youth with disabilities a direct avenue to decision-makers (EYA & IICRD, 2004).

In Hampton, Virginia Youth Services reaches marginalized populations by focusing their outreach on neighbourhoods rather than schools:

John Kyle (National League of Cities): How [do you] encourage and ensure that the young people are coming from diverse ethnic, economic, cultural and language backgrounds in youth councils and in the various activities? *Cindy Carlson (Director of Youth Services, Hampton):* We spend an awful lot of time in neighbourhoods ... building skills at the neighbourhood level and developing leadership and getting kids involved in ... the day-to-day things that go on in a community. From that, you attract a whole different type of young people that aren't necessarily attracted to something that happens at the school level or at the city government level. (National League of Cities, 2002)

Scheduling and transportation

- Transportation or public transport vouchers are provided
- Meetings and activities are scheduled to accommodate youth

One of *the most* significant barriers to youth participation is lack of frequent, cheap and easily accessible public transport, which can hinder youth ability to attend meetings or events. (Laidlaw Foundation, 2002; P. Knowles, & K. Moore, personal communication, March 11th, 2005; National League of Cities, 2000, 2002) This is especially true for youth living in rural communities. Therefore, municipalities and organizations that want to succeed in engaging youth in governance (at all levels) will provide for their transportation. Providing bus passes for youth to attend youth advisory council or community board meetings is one way to overcome transportation barriers.

Busy schedules, commitments to school, work and extra-curricular activities can also be a barrier to youth participation. Youth and adults will inevitably have different scheduling demands. Adults need to be flexible and give youth equal consideration in planning board meetings and activities. Providing child care for youth with children, scheduling meetings after school hours, or partnering with schools so that young people

¹⁰ Play Works is a group of organizations concerned about the future of our youth. They represent the areas of sport, physical activity, civic engagement, arts and culture, rural youth, and recreation. Their goal is to bring back the power of play to Ontario youth and to advance youth play on local and provincial public and political agendas (<http://www.playworkspartnership.ca>).

can earn credit to participate in activities during school hours, are examples of facilitating youth participation.

Adult capacity

- Build support networks
 - Internally - create a supportive team to develop strategies for youth participation
 - Externally - connect with local youth-serving organizations
- Adopt youth-friendly language and operations
 - A fun, energetic atmosphere (play, laugh, and be real)
 - Create youth-friendly working spaces
 - Be open to learning new things and making mistakes
 - Recognize and engage different learning styles
- Develop understanding of youth culture - work with youth in authentic and meaningful ways
- Build participatory skills, i.e. relationship building, communication

A first step in building adult capacity to share decision-making and governance powers with youth is increasing adult sensitivity “to the inherent difference in experience, status, power, control, knowledge of resources, language, etc...” between youth and adults (Australian Youth Foundation, 1998, p.4). Adults need to unlearn attitudes which lead them to make false assumptions about youth. For example, adults may assume that youth lack the knowledge, ability, and motivation to contribute to “adult” processes based on the way youth talk, dress, or wear their hair, and/or societal stereotypes of youth. Stefany Hansen, currently a general member of the Toronto Youth Cabinet, suggests that all adults and youth who are engaged in decision-making together should receive anti-oppression training to help them establish relationships based on equality and respect (S. Hansen, personal communications, July 29th, 2005).

The language and operations used in adult work environments can alienate young people. The use of “professional” language, i.e. jargon, abbreviations and acronyms, tends to exclude youth from a conversation. Operations such as laborious decision-making processes tend to frustrate youth with adult inaction: “they talk about something forever and don’t do it” (Laidlaw Foundation, 2002, p. 35). For optimal youth participation, ideas should be presented in a youth-friendly and people-friendly way, operations should be flexible, and workspaces comfortable. For example, adults can streamline some decision-making processes to facilitate earlier action that encourages youth to stay involved.

Adults need support networks to help them understand youth culture, to build skills which enable them to work effectively with youth, and to discuss their fears and challenges in working with youth. Optimally, initiatives which aim to engage youth in governance are supported internally, through the development of a youth engagement team, and externally, through connections with youth-serving organizations, i.e. The HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, or individuals skilled in building youth-adult partnerships.

Youth capacity

- A mentor, consistently available to “be there” for youth
- Youth roles, responsibilities, and expectations are clearly defined
- Orientation to the workings of the organization/board/program/council is provided
- Participatory skills development, i.e. appreciative inquiry, relationship building, communications, listening, collaboration, organization, planning, priority-setting
- Self-discovery, confidence building
- Time is made for youth to reflect upon, evaluate and celebrate their contributions

Many young people will require skills and competency development in order to gain confidence and comfort in sharing decision-making power with adults. Just as adults may not *recognize* youth right to participate, youth may not *realize* that they have a right to participate in processes and decisions that affect them. Helping youth develop a positive identity, know their strengths, and their potential to participate in decision-making, is key to building youth capacity.

Youth identify mentors as one of their most important needs in building their participatory capacity – someone who is more like a friend than an authority figure, who has an interest in their lives and can just “be there” for them, providing direction, guidance and training when needed and stepping back and allowing them to figure things out on their own when appropriate (Dumond, C., 2003; Laidlaw Foundation, 2002).

Continuity of youth participation

- Youth coordinator (someone hired and paid to coordinate youth participation)
- Established networks for recruiting youth
- Youth-led training during youth turnover transitions
- System for recording and passing on learning and information

Youth lives are constantly changing. They may be in transition from high school to post-secondary education, from school to work, from living at home to living on their own, etc. Adults who want to integrate youth into their decision-making processes need to recognize that there will be high youth turnover rates, and that youth will have varying capacities for commitment. Adults should not expect that particular young people will continue for a long time (K. Naylor, personal communications, August 2nd, 2005). To accommodate youth turnover, it is important that strategies and support systems are set up to facilitate passing of information and learning from youth to youth, i.e. ongoing, continuous training as “senior” youth leave, and new members join. Youth, who have participated on councils, boards of directors or youth-led programs emphasize the importance of a coordinator or mentor, adult or youth, who can facilitate youth transition (C. Malone, personal communications, August 3rd, 2005; S. Hansen, personal communications, July 29th, 2005)

Healthy Youth-Adult Partnerships

- Shared leadership and decision-making power
 - Balance between adult direction and youth initiative and action
 - Creation of a working space comfortable for both youth and adults
 - Roles and responsibilities are shared equally

- Youth and adults have equal opportunity to share their opinions and ideas
 - Youth voice given more or equal consideration
- Time is set aside to play together and build relationships
 - Youth and adult contributions are regularly celebrated and appreciated

Healthy youth-adult partnerships are based on non-hierarchical relationships, caring and respect (Dumond, C., 2003). Adults working towards healthy youth-adult partnerships should take on a supportive, rather than a supervisory, role. As youth start out in their roles as partners with adults, they need more support, and adults can provide this. They can motivate youth, hold youth accountable, and provide opportunities for youth participation, ownership, and skills-building (Dumond, C., 2003). They can orient youth to the workings of organizational or municipal systems, facilitate a healthy team dynamic, and connect youth to community resources (Dumond, C., 2003). Most importantly, they can genuinely care for and be committed to youth, and ensure youth equality in decision-making processes, i.e. equal opportunities for youth to share, and equal consideration given to their opinions.

In a healthy youth-adult partnership, young people are empowered to take ownership of their responsibilities, share leadership, decision-making, and action with other youth and adults, and step up to new responsibilities and roles as they gain confidence and skills (Dumond, C., 2003; Laidlaw Foundation, 2002).

Locally, the Mainland South Teen Health Centre is a model for healthy youth-adult partnerships. Public health nurses at the centre are mentors for the youth peer education programs and youth action teams at J.L. Ilsley High School in Spryfield, Nova Scotia. A former student affirms that the success of youth participation at the centre can be attributed to the trust, respect, care and commitment that the public health nurses have for the students (J. Danson-Faraday, personal communications, August 10th, 2004).

Meaningful Contribution

- Youth are meeting a genuine need – their contributions make a difference
- Youth identify key areas of concern
- Participation is linked to first-hand experience, rooted in local spaces and places
- Participation offers youth a challenge, adventure, and new learning
- Youth contributions are recognized and celebrated by an outside community
- Youth feel a sense of accomplishment
- Youth return to the program or process and more youth join

Meaningful youth contribution happens when youth have met a genuine need, their skills and competencies have made a real difference, they have felt a sense of pride and self-worth in their accomplishment, and they have been recognized and appreciated by a larger community (HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, 2003).

Mayor Nancy Bates, Farmington Hills, Michigan: ...before you involve young people, you better be clear in your mind why you're doing it ... Their involvement has to be meaningful. You can't fool young people for very long. If you don't mean it, and you don't sincerely want them at the table, they're going to figure it out. (National League of Cities, 2002)

Youth participation is most meaningful when young people identify and act upon key areas of concern themselves, or when decision-making is limited to tangible issues rooted in local spaces and places, which affect youth directly (Golombek, S., 2002; Child and Youth Friendly Cities, 2004).

Adventuresome learning is another key component of meaningful contribution. Youth have a propensity for action, “seek to test new behaviours”, and are attracted to “experiences that offer challenge, adventure, and new learning” (HeartWood, 2003, p. 6). Adventuresome learning challenges youth “to step outside of their comfort zones to learn and grow” (HeartWood, 2003, p. 6). These experiences might include giving a public speech to city council, governing the operations of a skateboard park, or designing a peer education workshop.

Youth participation is institutionalized

- Municipalities establish a “Local Government Plan of Action” (EYA & IICRD, 2004, p. 11)
- Youth on boards have the right to vote
- Youth are paid employees of city planning and development departments
- Formal political rights are extended to young people, i.e. voting age is lowered to 16
- Policies require a direct relationship between governments and youth, i.e. a youth representative from a youth advisory council is an active member of city council
- Part of municipal budget is allocated to youth participation – this allocation is not subject to cuts

Institutionalization means that there is a strong political commitment to youth participation in governance. It moves past including youth as a “good idea” and builds it right into the structure and processes of organizations, governments and other institutions. Institutionalizing youth participation is crucial to publicly legitimize youth voice, to increase the accessibility of government and organizational structures to youth, and ensure youth influence in municipal planning, development, and decision-making.

In order to have wider and more sustainable impact, the promotion of young people’s participation needs to move away from ad-hoc activity-based approaches and become mainstreamed in the central aspects of social structures, institutions and processes (Golombek, S., 2002, p. 55).

Supportive government policies can ensure that youth participation in governance becomes routine practice, i.e. policies that require youth participation, and allow youth to vote on governmental and non-governmental boards; budgetary allocations for youth participation in governance. In 1995, the City of Vancouver formally committed to engaging youth in city decision-making by developing its Civic Youth Strategy policy. The policy includes a commitment to employing a team of youth, the Youth Outreach Team, as city staff (Blanchet-Cohen, N. & Cook, P., 2005). Youth advocates recommend that each municipality develop its own youth engagement strategy, which includes a systematic approach for documenting, evaluating, integrating, and replicating successful youth participatory processes (IICRD & EYA, 2004; United Nations, 2004).

Public relations

- Outreach to, and build positive relationships with local media
- Invite media to cover stories about youth contributions to community or governance
- Lobby for a weekly column on youth in the newspaper (or show on television or radio)

In spite of increasing recognition of the value of youth participation, it has not been widely embraced. Adults frequently meet to discuss young people's situations without questioning the fact that youth are not present. "Youth" conferences are planned without inviting young people to speak, sit on a panel or lead a workshop (Hoover, A.B. & Weisenbach, A., 1999).

Media and public relations are extremely important for gaining widespread acceptance of youth participation in governance. Media images and stories of youth often portray youth as problems or "issues" in their communities, rather than valuable assets and contributing citizens. Positive media coverage of youth can break down negative youth stereotypes, increase public and governmental support of youth participation in governance, and encourage more youth to participate. In Bartholomew County, Indiana, the local newspaper has a regular section to cover youth contributions to the community (National League of Cities, 2002).

Stable Environment

- Core budget to support youth initiatives and operations
- Consistent funding, renewable over the long-term (at least five years)
- Paid mentor to support youth
- Youth have access to material and human resources of organization or department

"Effective youth participation needs a comfortable and protected environment in which it can continuously develop" (Golombek, S., 2002, p. 48). A survey of youth advisory councils by Parks and Recreation Ontario in 2004, found that the strength of a council is consistently "tied to an individual who is an advisory, supports the process, and is available...on a consistent basis", and the longevity of a youth council is tied to the consistency of its funding (Price, M.E., 2004, p. 3). Youth participants on youth councils, boards, youth action teams, and youth-led programs confirm the results of this research (S. Hansen, personal communications, July 29th, 2005; C. Malone, personal communications, August 3rd, 2005).

The Youth Commission in Hampton, Virginia is a model for providing a stable environment in which youth participation can flourish and develop. It has an annual budget of \$75 000, which supports community youth service projects and operations of the youth commission (National League of Cities, 2002). Additional funding is provided to pay adult staff members who support the youth commission. \$75 000 may not be realistic for all municipalities, but adequate funding for youth participation in governance should be consistently allocated in municipal budgets. (Golombek, S., 2002; Price, M.E., 2004). Without funding, programs, structures and processes for youth participation in governance do not have the means to develop and improve.

Evaluation

- Systemic approach to documenting, evaluating, integrating, and replicating successful participatory processes
- Youth are included as evaluators and developers of the evaluation process

In the face of “scepticism about the efficacy and viability of youth participation”, regular evaluation of participatory processes is needed to provide evidence of the positive outcomes of engaging youth in governance and decision-making (United Nations, 2004, p. 285). Evaluation is also necessary to learn more about effective and ineffective practices so that programs may be strengthened or restructured.

Summary

Each of the above indicators of success is a goal towards which individuals, organizations, or governments promoting youth participation in governance can strive. All of the elements of success do not have to be in place before an organization or municipality begins a youth engagement initiative. There will always be fumbling in the initial stages and development of projects, programs, or structures which enable youth participation. This is OK! What is most important is that adult leaders of programs, organizations, or governments can say “yes” to the following questions before proceeding to engage youth in governance:

- Are you clear on why youth engagement is important to your organization?
- Do you believe that youth have a legitimate place in the governance of this organization or program?
- Are you willing to develop and invest in the necessary structures and strategies to effectively engage youth in governance? (Laidlaw Foundation, 2002, p. 40)

If the answer is yes to all of the above questions, then go ahead! The success indicators and their checklists are goals to work towards. In striving to meet these goals, always consult with adults who have experience working with youth, and most importantly, with youth!

4. Local initiatives for youth participation in governance

In Nova Scotia, there are examples of youth programs, youth-serving organizations, and local governments that are creating opportunities for meaningful youth participation in governance. New and established organizations, projects, and structures are creating foundations on which to build better integrated youth participatory processes in Halifax and Nova Scotia. Some have been previously cited as examples, however, further information on local initiatives is deemed helpful for Nova Scotia-based municipalities and organizations. The following is a description of youth governance initiatives in Nova Scotia. They are categorized according to the strategies outlined in Section Two.

Research and consultation

In 2003 and 2004, the **HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development** used participatory action research to support and research three youth groups: the **Spryfield Youth Action Team**, which was working to make positive changes to their physical and social environment; a group which was working with town council for access to public space for the development of a skate park (**Growing up In Cities Canada**); and a group which was working to evaluate and redesign their own programs in the foster care system (**Destination UP**). The three women who led this research for HeartWood compiled a leader's manual for participatory action research with young people, which can be accessed in the "resources" link on the HeartWood website – www.heartwood.ns.ca (Dumond, C., Moody, R., & Van Wagner, E., 2004)

Supported by the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, **HRM Recreation Tourism and Culture (RTC)** has used PAR with youth to guide the development of their Youth Engagement Strategy. Youth surveys, community asset mapping, and dialogue sessions have been used to find out what youth like in their communities, what changes they would like to see in their communities, how youth can bring about these changes, and how adults can support youth in making these changes. The results of this research have been used to develop RTC unit action plans that will increase youth participation in the planning and delivery of RTC youth services, and will be used to make youth governance recommendations to HRM city council.

During the research phase of the Youth Engagement Strategy, two students in the Mainland South Unit developed a questionnaire and implemented a student survey at their school, J.L. Ilsley. The survey asked students to list their favourite "hang-out" spots and to describe how they would make these places more youth-friendly. Using the results of the survey, the youth completed a photo-mapping project of all the favourite spots mentioned. With the pictures that they took, they created a scrap book of photos to document young people's favourite places in Mainland South. Youth suggestions for improvements at each place are written beside the pictures in the scrapbook and will be addressed over the coming year.

The HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development is a lead partner in the **Growing up in Canadian Cities** research project, funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. As a lead partner, HeartWood has been using research tools with youth in Nova Scotia to develop and improve tools and approaches that strengthen the participation of marginalized youth in service-delivery and policy-making. Before,

during, and after the research process, HeartWood has been working with these same youth to make active changes in their communities, i.e. lobbying for public recognition of skate boarding and space for a skate park.

Youth on Boards

As mentioned previously, the **Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Project** has a youth board and 25% youth representation on the board of directors. Youth and adults genuinely share decision making at the LGBYP and youth have a tremendous sense of ownership over the governance of the organization.

At each of the **Youth Health Centres** funded by **Capital Health in HRM**, there is a Youth Health Advisory board, comprised of 50% adults and 50% youth. On the advisory boards, the youth drive the agenda, and report on the activities of the health centre, i.e. the **Peer Health Education Program** in the case of Mainland South (as described in Section 2). The adults offer experience in how a board is run and provide connections for the youth to community organizations. Thus, the youth get a sense that their work is important because they see that their input is valued by adults, and that it influences outcomes in the broader health community (S. Lane, personal communications, August 2nd, 2005). Casey Malone, a former member of the Youth Health Advisory board in Mainland South, asserts that the board is an exemplary model of youth participation in governance. Youth have a vote, the same power as any one else, and sometimes more of a say. The adults, including nurses, administrators, Planned Parenthood counsellors, and other community members, “were supportive, and wanted to let the youth shine. They provided direction and support when necessary. They were just like us.” (C. Malone, personal communications, August 3rd, 2005)

The **HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development** board of directors includes four youth (ten members in total) under the age of 24, who have full voting rights. Throughout the development of its **Youth Engagement Strategy (YES)**, HRM Recreation Tourism and Culture has been creating opportunities to strengthen youth participation in decision-making. For example, one youth was invited to sit on the advisory board for the new fitness centre in Sheet Harbour.

Youth Councils

In 1989, the province of **Nova Scotia** formed the **Youth Secretariat**, the only agency in the province with a mandate devoted exclusively to its youth population. It coordinates the provincial government’s response to the “needs, concerns, and aspirations of Nova Scotia youth and youth-serving organizations”

(<http://youth.ednet.ns.ca/secretariat/secretariat.htm>, Para. 2). One of the secretariat’s goals is to facilitate youth inclusion in decision-making through interdepartmental collaboration, research with young people, and networking with non-governmental youth serving organizations. The Youth Secretariat has a Youth Advisory Council, made up of fifteen youth between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. They meet four times a year to talk about youth issues and offer advice and ideas to the provincial government on how to make programs and services better for youth.

The **town of Parsboro** has had a youth council since 1997. One of the town councilors serves as a mentor to the youth and provides a connection between the youth town council and the adult town council. The youth council is funded and supported to carry out projects, one of which was the development of a skate park. The towns of Bridgewater and Truro are currently working to initiate youth councils.

The **United Way (UW) of Halifax** is considering a proposal for the development of a youth council within their organization. Two objectives are behind this consideration: how the UW can engage young people within its organization, and the initiation of a youth grant program to promote youth participation in philanthropy. An employee of UW has formed a group of youth (age 14 – 28 from all over HRM), who are doing some asset mapping research to learn: How is UW already supporting youth? What benefits can an organization gain from involving youth? What possibilities exist for UW and youth? What role could a UW Youth Council play in UW? These youth will also do some asset mapping of the HRM to find out what youth participation initiatives are working well and how a UW youth council could support these initiatives. The youth will report the results of their asset mapping to the UW board, which will in turn decide whether to officially accept the proposal for a UW youth council (J. Feuer, personal communications, April 13th, 2005).

Locally, there is the **Sackville Youth Council**, formed in February of 2002 in response to the population growth in the area and the realization that youth were not being adequately represented in the Sackville and Beaverbank communities. The council works with local youth serving organizations and municipal departments to involve youth in the community. They coordinate two major events on an annual basis, the Sackville Family Winter Carnival and the Sackville Youth Conference. Currently, some members of the council are working with a Registered Nurse Educator at the Cobequid Multi-Service Centre to form a youth committee that will address health issues in Bedford and Fall River. Other members are working with the Second Lake Regional Park Association Committee (<http://youth.ednet.ns.ca/secretariat/secretariat.htm>).

Local Action Projects

Since 1999, the **HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development** has helped more than 15 Youth Action Teams (YATs) get started in Nova Scotia. In 2003 and 2004, HeartWood conducted a qualitative research project in which they interviewed 54 young people, adults, and community members involved with youth action teams. HeartWood found out what was working well and what could be done to create even better teams, and used the results of their findings to create their Community Youth Development framework. This is a model which guides all of their work with youth and can be found on their website – www.heartwood.ns.ca – under “Our Approach”.

The **Spryfield YAT** (<http://users.eastlink.ca/%7emsthcyat/yat-homepage.htm>) is one of the YAT's HeartWood has supported. Every year, members of Spryfield's YAT host an annual clean up of the MacIntosh Run River, a Valentine's Dinner for the Single Parents Centre, and a memorial every December 6th to the 14 women killed at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in 1987.

Ship Harbour, Nova Scotia has had several consecutive youth action teams since 1997. According to a former member (who belonged for four years) of the Ship Harbour

YAT, “Before the youth action team, the community was really judgmental and didn’t think the youth could do anything good” (http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/news_builders.shtml#kindness). Not surprisingly, these youth have transformed adult perceptions of youth in Ship Harbour. They have been involved in random acts of service, such as shovelling snow. They have built a basketball court for the community’s recreational use, hosted community parties, and in 2004, ran and hosted a Social Justice Youth Forum.

Youth-Run Programs

In addition to the Peer Health Education Programs mentioned earlier (in section 2), **Capital Health** provides funding for student action teams to develop and implement tobacco education in secondary schools. Interested students need to write a proposal and submit it to Capital Health, and if accepted, they receive \$500 to implement the project. One group of students decided on a creative piece that showcased 1160 wooden crosses on the lawn of their secondary school to represent the number of Nova Scotia residents that had died from tobacco-related disease in one year.

Just Live It! is a youth-run program at J.L. Ilsley High School in Spryfield, NS. The student committee plans, promotes and facilitates most activities planned at their school, including intramurals, rock climbing, kayaking, scuba diving. In one project senior students work with the local junior high school students to promote their wellbeing through healthy and active lifestyles. Just Live is part of a bigger program called Active Kids Healthy Kids. It is funded through Capital Health, Nova Scotia Health Promotion, Department of Education, HRM - RTC, and the Halifax Regional School Board. In its first year, it was run by these various partners.

In its second year, the partners hired a full-time youth coordinator to be 100% available to the Just Live It! youth, Monday to Friday at J.L. Ilsley High School. Anna Grantham, the coordinator, attests that ninety percent of Just Live It’s initiatives are youth-driven and the program would not survive without their participation (A. Grantham, personal communications, July 21st, 2005). They choose the programs and their schedules, create advertisements, and recruit other students to join. Currently, Just Live It! is in its third year and the students are enthusiastic about the program (between 15 and 20 students are on the committee). Unfortunately, the program is scheduled to finish March 31st, 2006 because of a lack of funding and they are looking for ways to sustain the program.

Youth-Run Organizations

The **Nova Scotia Secondary Schools Students’ Association** (<http://www.nsssa.ca/index.htm>) is a non-profit organization run by student leaders. Its focus is leadership development at the high school level. Every year, the NSSSA hosts a conference to help students learn more about themselves and their abilities. The Association is divided into two main groups, the Provincial Cabinet and the Conference Committee. In addition to its responsibility for the day-to-day running of the organization, the Provincial Cabinet meets once a month with the Minister of Education

to discuss student issues and school matters. The Conference Committee, as their name implies, takes care of running the annual conference.

5. Conclusion

Youth participation must become an integral component of local, national and international policies for youth, and should provide the framework for decisions and actions that affect the daily lives of children and young people. Only then will the traditional approaches towards youth begin to evolve and the oft-stated, commitment to their participation, begin to have meaning. (United Nations, 2004, p. 287)

It has been 16 years since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child declared it a universal children's right to participate in decisions on all matters that affect their lives, communities, and matters of importance to them. Yet, the voice of many young people still goes unheard by governments, community organizations, schools, etc. Youth between the ages of 10 and 19 comprise between 13 and 14 percent of Canadian and Nova Scotia communities (Statistics Canada, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2004). That is between 13 and 14 percent of the population whose contributions and potential as community decision-makers, planners, and builders is typically undervalued or not recognized. Imagine the positive change that could be possible in Canadian communities if the energy, talents, creativity, and unique perspectives of these youth were harnessed to their full potential.

HRM is in a great position to take on the role of harnessing the potential of its youth. The Building Strong Communities Initiative currently underway is based on principles of the contribution and participation of *all* citizens and building face-to-face relationships between governments, citizens, and community groups. The success of this initiative requires meaningful youth engagement. The work that has been completed in the development of the HRM Recreation Tourism and Culture Youth Engagement Strategy and the learnings from other youth participation initiatives in Nova Scotia (highlighted in this literature review) can pave the way for an HRM and Nova Scotia-wide youth inclusion strategy.

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6. Appendices – Resources and Tools



Indicates a Nova Scotia resource



Indicates a Canadian resource



Indicates an American resource

Appendix A: Research and consultation

a. Community Mapping



The Youth Community Asset Mapping Project: <http://www.eya.ca/youthmappers/>

This is a joint initiative between Environmental Youth Alliance and the Self-Help Resource Association in BC, which uses community asset mapping as a tool to build healthy youth and healthy communities.



Youth Hands! Youth Voices! Youth Policy Engagement through Local Action Projects, A toolkit for youth organizers. Available in PDF format - <http://www.eya.ca/wuf/docs/YVYA/YVYA%20Oct%203%2003.pdf> – and for order on the GroundWorks Learning Centre website: <http://gworks.ca/site/index.php> in the Program Manuals link in Resources.

This toolkit is designed for youth, and organizations that work with youth who want to learn more about the mechanisms of local government, and how they can work with their local government seeking opportunities “to engage youth in decision making in a way that is congruent with their formal processes and parameters, but also in a way that resonates with youth”. The manual describes a number of youth action projects that have utilized community mapping to influence decision-making.



Mapping Community Assets Workbook.
http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/com_mapping.pdf

Published by the Northwest Regional Educational Library, which aims to improve educational results for youth and adults by providing research and development assistance to education, government, and community agencies, the Mapping Community Assets Workbook uses questions and exercises to help the reader understand and utilize community mapping.

b. Participatory Action Research



Participatory Action Research with Young People: A leader’s manual.
HeartWood Publications, http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/resources_publications.shtml

Describes HeartWood's approach to Participatory Action Research with young people, and includes practical PAR workshops and activities organized by theme. Serves as a

guide for youth groups and community associations, when designing their own Participatory Action Research Project.



Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL).

http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/support_community/yell.html

A project of the John W. Gardner Centre for Youth and Their Communities, YELL guides youth through a participatory action research process. YELL participants choose an issue to study that impacts their lives, learn to use a variety of research methods to investigate it, analyze their findings, and develop plans for action and advocacy that address their concerns.



Creative Tools: Civic Engagement of Young People

This “toolkit” resulted from the learned experience of the Growing Up in Cities Canada project (<http://www.growingupincities.ca/english/guic-canada.php>). The tools were field tested in Vancouver, Halifax and Gatineau and are designed to gather young people’s perceptions of the strengths and challenges in their communities. The tools also form the basis for developing action plans that involve youth in civic decision-making in partnership with community planners, and government representatives. It is available for order from:

The International Institute for Child Rights and Development
Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria
PO Box 1700 STN CSC
Victoria, BC
Canada V8W 2Y2



The Freechild Project, <http://www.freechild.org/index.htm>

The Freechild Project “seeks to advocate, inform, and celebrate social change led by and with young people around the world, particularly those who have been historically denied the right to participate”. Click on the Search link, on their Information menu (left-hand side of the webpage) and you will see a list of alphabetized terms. Scroll to “P”, and click on Participatory Action Research (PAR). Here you will find links to organizations, publications and curricula that were picked by Freechild’s youth researchers as good tools and information sources for PAR.



Youth Participation in Urban Recreational Planning: An educational video for planners, youth workers, and youth: available for order at <http://www.sfu.ca/cns/sk8/>

A 30 minute video that covers all the basic issues that municipal planners, youth recreation workers and youth and youth groups need to know to get started on creating urban recreational spaces that are designed, built and used by empowered youth. The video represents over two full years work and exploration by researchers at The Centre for Canadian Studies, Simon Fraser University, including, ongoing participatory research

in a Vancouver suburb that is empowering youth to design, build and fund their own skateboard park.

c. Consultation



Taking Young People Seriously - Consulting Young People about their Ideas and Opinions: A Handbook for Organizations working with young people.

The handbook is intended for anyone who wants to know more about effectively engaging youth in consultation processes. It provides resources to help plan, undertake and evaluate a consultation. Available on the Youth Participation link of the website for the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia: <http://www.yacsa.com.au/cgi-bin/wf.pl>



Youth Voices in Community Design. <http://www.californiacenter.org/voices/>

This is a how-to guide (published by the California Centre for Civic Participation and Youth Development) for getting youth involved in local policymaking and community planning. It is supported by an extensive online library of articles and activities.

Appendix B: Youth on Boards



Involve Youth: A guide to involving youth in decision making. City of Toronto
<http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/involveyouth/>



Youth on Board, <http://www.youthonboard.org>

Youth on Board prepares youth to be leaders and decision makers in their communities and strengthens relationships between youth and adults through publications, customized workshops, and technical assistance. Two of their publications are listed below:

- *Why and How to Involve Young People in Organizational Decision-Making.*
<http://www.youthonboard.org/publications.htm>
- *14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making.*
<http://www.youthonboard.org/publications.htm>



At the Table, www.atthetable.org

At the Table is a website initiative hosted by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, and formed to facilitate a coordinated, sustainable national youth participation movement. The website is designed to provide resources and information about how to involve young people in decision-making. It has an extensive resource list and is an absolute *must see* for any individual, organization or municipality seeking to strengthen youth participation in governance. “*14 Points to Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making*” is an internet version of the written publication by Youth on Boards. You can find it at <http://www.atthetable.org/resources.asp>. It has helpful resources, tools, and links for each point. For example:

- *50 Things Adults can Do With Youth.*
http://www.atthetable.org/images/Details/03130215590869_LOTSOFTHINGSA DULTSCANDOWITHYOUTH.pdf
- *Youth/Adult Partnership Self-Assessment Tool.*
http://www.atthetable.org/images/Details/03130216040354_Youth-AdultPartnershipsAssessment.pdf
- *At the Table: Youth Voices in Decision-Making.* A video.

Appendix C: Youth Advisory Councils



National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families,
<http://www.nlc.org/IYEF/>

The YEF Institute is a national resource for municipal leaders, providing strategies and tools municipal officials have direct access to a broad array of strategies and tools that can help them strengthen families and enhance the well-being of children and youth. Below are links to two of these tools:

- *Promoting Youth Participation: action kit for municipal leaders.* Available as a link from http://www.nlc.org/iyef/publications_resources/2181.cfm

A publication of the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, this action kit provides municipal leaders with a menu of opportunities for initiating youth participation in municipal governance.

- NLC's Network on Municipal Leadership for Youth Participation,
http://www.nlc.org/iyef/program_areas/youth_development/4349.cfm

This e-mail network focuses on the roles that local governments can play in promoting youth participation through youth councils, teen courts, youth service, youth-mapping of community assets, appointments of youth to municipal boards and commissions, youth summits, and other methods of youth civic engagement. Through periodic e-mail communication to this network, NLC provides information to, and encourages cross-site information exchange among participating municipal officials and staff and other community leaders. A periodic e-mail newsletter is also distributed. Four e-mail newsletters are available from the website above (youth summits, youth service, youth and adult partnerships, diversity). To participate in this network, you can e-mail iyef@nlc.org and request a survey, which will enable NLC to determine the areas in which they can provide you with assistance.



The McCreary Centre Society, Youth Advisory Council (YAC),
http://www.mcs.bc.ca/ya_yac.htm


The YAC is a diverse group of about 15-20 youth ranging in age from 16-26. Since 1995, the YAC has initiated its own projects and participated in other McCreary programs. Two members of YAC serve on the Society's Board of Directors. Through the YAC, resources and workshops are available:

- YAC-Link (http://www.mcs.bc.ca/ya_yaclink.htm) is a great resource currently being developed for anyone who is interested in organizing a Youth Advisory Council (YAC). YAC-Link is a partnership between 3 YACs that pools resources and expertise in developing a resource to help others start and sustain a Youth Advisory Council. It will be a combination of a written guide and a peer led

- workshop, which will be developed and then facilitated by experienced members from the three involved YACs.
- YACshop manuals can be downloaded from the website (http://www.mcs.bc.ca/ya_yshops.htm). These workshops by youth for youth include *So Ya Wanna YAC?*, *Creativity and You*, and *Communication*


 *Sault Ste. Marie Youth Council*, <http://www.saultyouth.com/content/youthcouncil/>

Sault Ste. Marie formed a Youth Opportunities Task Force to carry out the Youth Opportunities Assessment Project (YOAP). One of the results of this project was the creation of a concrete strategy for the development of a sustainable youth advisory committee/youth cabinet. For information on the report, contact YOAP at 945-1600 Ext. 233.

 *City of Vancouver's Youth Outreach Team*, <http://www.vancouveryouth.ca/>

The Youth Outreach Team (YOT) in Vancouver was formed to help the city of Vancouver achieve its' Civic Youth Strategy objectives. The team is hired and paid by Vancouver's City Council and works with city departments to identify and establish opportunities for youth engagement. For example, the YOT is working with Vancouver's Police Department to form a Police/Youth Relations Working Group that will build safer communities for youth. The YOT is also working with the 2010 Olympic Bid Corporation to include youth in decision-making on Olympic planning issues, i.e. environmental sustainability, arts and culture, employment, and tourism. Their contact information, and resources and tools are provided on their website.


Appendix D: Youth engagement in local action projects

 *Youth Hands! Youth Voices! Youth Policy Engagement through Local Action Projects, A toolkit for youth organizers.* Available in PDF format - <http://www.eya.ca/wuf/docs/YVYA/YVYA%20Oct%203%2003.pdf> – and for order on the GroundWorks Learning Centre website: <http://gworks.ca/site/index.php> in the Program Manuals link in Resources.

This toolkit was developed for and is available through GroundWorks, a public learning center in Victoria, BC. It was designed for youth, youth organizations, and youth service providers who want to learn more about how local government works, and how they can work with their local government to affect local decision making. The manual is also valuable for municipal decision makers looking for possible opportunities to engage youth in decision making. To order this resource, contact Linda Geggie at linda@gworks.ca

 *California Centre for Civic Participation and Youth Development,* <http://www.californiacenter.org/>

This organization helps youth Shape Communities and Public Policy by providing opportunities for middle and high school youth to participate in civic education, leadership, and service programs that directly connect to local, state, and federal issues. They have three Community Leadership Programs. Youth Action League assists nine schools and 200 youth each semester to develop a needs assessment of their community, a service learning project and a policy activity. CATAPULT builds youth leadership capacity to understand and work with their communities, politicians, and the political processes and issues in their counties. Youth VOICES (Vision, Opinions, Investment, Creativity, Engagement, Solutions) in Community Design aims to improve youth awareness of and involvement in community planning and land-use decisions. A prior project was the creation of a *Youth Engagement Handbook*. For more information contact Jim Muldavin - muldavin@californiacenter.org

 *Youth in Philanthropy Canada,* http://www.yipcanada.org/index_e.cfm

A program of Community Foundations of Canada, YIP Canada partners youth advisory councils with local community foundations to raise money, build endowment funds, and make grants to local philanthropic youth projects.

 *Youth Works! Creating and developing youth-led volunteer projects,* <http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/pdf/youthworks.pdf>

A Youth Volunteer Corps publication, this is a guide to help young individuals and groups to organize community service projects.

Appendix E: Youth-run programs and organizations



Kinex Youth Initiative, <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/ypshra/about.htm>

Kinex is a diverse, youth driven team that promotes community defined and population specific models of peer support. Working towards social and systemic change, Kinex strives to build the capacity of youth by valuing their lived experience, involving youth in meaningful decision making and supporting youth involvement in shaping their communities.



Youth Action Network, <http://www.youthactionnetwork.org/>

The Youth Action Network (YAN) is a non-profit organization, founded and driven by youth. YAN strongly believes in the ability of youth to affect change in communities and the world, and advocates for greater youth participation, both locally and globally. To this end, YAN aims to create and promote social development and public policy initiatives for Canadian youth through research, human resource development, public education, advocacy and regional co-operation.



Beenash Jafri. *Fire It Up!: A Toolkit for Youth Action*. (A Youth Action Network resource)

"Fire it Up!" is a manual for youth organizers dedicated to working for a just and sustainable society. It begins with a discussion of principles of anti-oppressive organizing including colonialism, feminism, anti-racism, homophobia, ableism, and class. It then presents tools and strategies for group organizing (facilitation, consensus decision-making, conflict mediation, networking), event and project planning (fund-raising, media relations, website design, communications), and popular education (icebreakers, energizers, reflection, evaluation). The manual is illustrated and accessible, and includes profiles of successful projects and lists of youth active organizations, resources, and websites. It is available in PDF format from <http://www.iicrd.org/cap/node/view/214>



Youth Venture, <http://www.youthventure.org/>

Youth Venture supports youth between the ages of 12 and 20 to create youth-led organizations that aim to provide a lasting benefit to a school, neighbourhood or community. Youth Venture provides youth organizations with access to resources including a national network of like-minded youth, media opportunities, and up to \$1000 for civic-minded endeavors.

Appendix F: Additional resources, tools, and organizations



John W. Gardner Centre for Youth and their Communities,
<http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/index.html>

The Gardner Center believes that effective youth development efforts will require a coordinated effort across sectors and interests. The Gardner Center works to integrate a community youth development perspective into the practices of schools, local governments, regional institutions, and policymaking systems, with the ultimate goals of maximizing the responsiveness of these systems to youths' developmental needs. The key strategies employed by the Gardner Center are: bridging research and practice, supporting community action, and sharing what works.



Youth Leadership Institute, <http://www.yli.org/>

YLI builds communities where young people and their adult allies come together to create positive social change. They design and implement community-based programs that provide youth with leadership skills in the areas of drug and alcohol abuse prevention, philanthropy, and civic engagement. They create curricula and training programs based on their program experience to foster social change efforts across the nation.



Youth Activism Project, www.youthactivism.org

This project is a youth advocate resource center, which aims to prove that minors can play a major role, by convincing and helping community, educational and government leaders to engage young people in meaningful roles and the decision-making process.



Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO), <http://www.cayfo.ca/cayfo/>

CAYFO recognizes the power of youth to be effective leaders and contributors in their communities and country. Thus, they support youth initiated projects, promote partnerships between youth and adults, recognize successes, talents and accomplishments of youth, highlight citizens and institutions that support youth, and involve young people in civic engagement and decisions that affect their lives.