

Young Decision Makers Summary Report 3 – November 2008

"One opinion, one vision can
start a revolution."

- YDM member

"Although we are all different – I learned that although discussion may be heated and stressful – having various people from different walks of life is beneficial to learning."

- YDM member



"[I feel] Empowered. Excited. Reinvigorated.
Optimistic."

- YDM member

"I've learned new methods of
dealing with group issues / discussions and
decision making as a group."

- YDM member

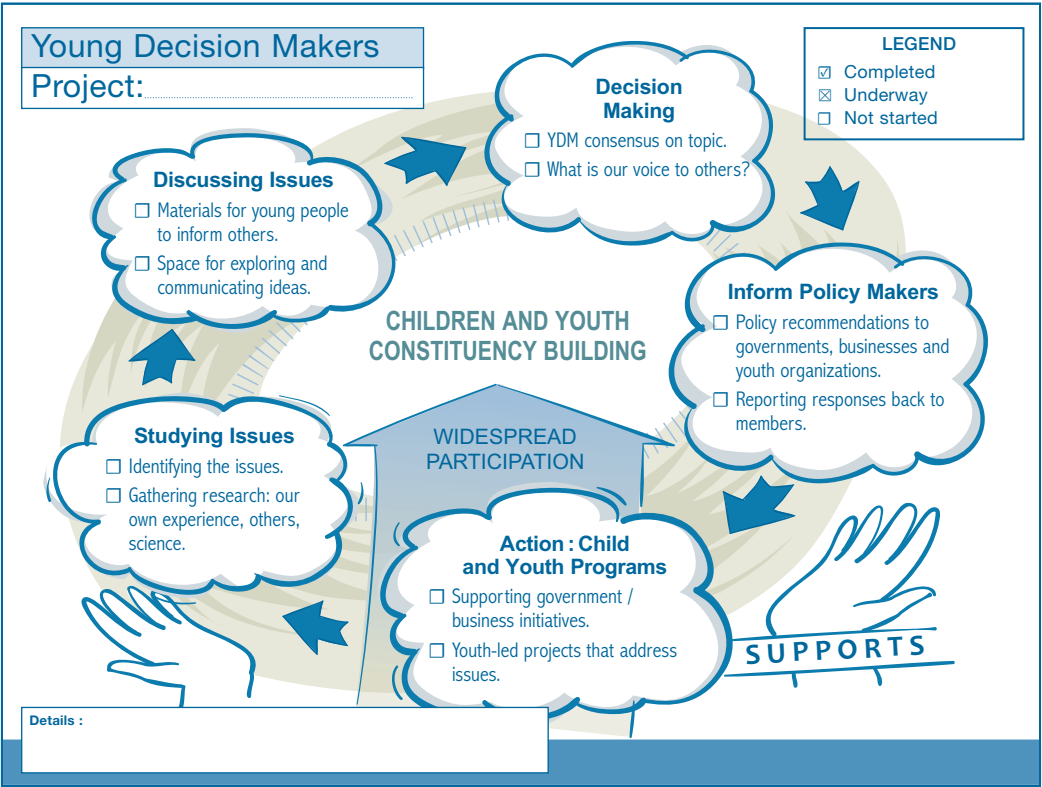
Young Decision Makers (YDM) is a body of youth, young adults and adult allies from across the country working collaboratively to ensure that youth voice is heard in formal and informal decision making bodies (government, systems and organizations). All our work is based on our eight principles:

**INCLUSIVE • ACCOUNTABLE • PARTICIPATORY • REPRESENTATIVE •
YOUTH-LED • YOUNG ADULT SUPPORT • INFORMAL STRUCTURE • ADULT
PARTNERSHIP**



The Young Decision Makers (YDM) held its third meeting from November 20th to 23rd at Horseshoe Resort in Barrie, Ontario. There were more than 55 youth (those under 18), young adult and adult ally participants coming from all over Canada. From the coasts of British Columbia to Newfoundland and as far north as Nunavut we came together to learn about past projects and to further understand how we can all help ensure youth are a part of the decision-making process. As well, the group explored what new projects YDM wants to undertake in the following year. This is the summary of our experience.

The YDM Project Model Illustration



The YDM has established a working model that guides the work we do when we undertake an issue. It starts with an issue being identified, either by young people, organizations, government or systems. We examine how we know what we know about the issue: from our own experiences, the experiences of our peers and family, and from science – research and facts about that issue. We create opportunities for discussions to take place on the issue. We consult others broadly – ensuring participation. This might mean creating a discussion guide, organizing focus groups, interviews, surveys or other ways to continue the discussion on the issue. The decision making process will help turn the discussions and decisions into recommendations that can inform policymakers. The circle is complete when the outcomes are reported back to those people who participated – to help demonstrate how their contribution was used and to begin action on the issue. In short, the model above helps us visualize what our journey is going to look like regardless the issue being explored.

THE MEETING PROCESS

The meeting was broken into five diverse teams reflecting geography, age and experience. Each group, led by a facilitator, identified an issue that as a group they could agree upon was an issue that needed to be examined in their communities. From this they conducted research examining existing knowledge and developing their own tools to gather the input of everyone else at the meeting. Following this, the groups had discussions on what they had learned and presented back to the larger meeting their experiences, ideas and in some cases recommendations on the issues. Stay tuned for further reports on these processes.

YDM MILESTONES

"I realized... I truly have inexplicable potential."
- YDM member

YDM Reports Back

A truly essential element of the YDM project model is reporting our responses back to the YDM members. This step stems from Accountability being one of our eight principles. With that in mind, several of our members shared the outcomes of past projects YDM undertook. Here is a summary of our work in the past year in the members' own words.

PAHO

Over 500 young people between the ages of 14 and 25 from across the country were consulted and worked to develop a youth friendly version of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) integrated strategy. These documents are being distributed across the member states of PAHO.

National Child Day Theme

439 youth between the ages of 14 and 18 from across the country were consulted through online surveys and 14 focus groups and discussions held in nine communities. Two partner organizations also participated by hosting their own discussion groups. The consultation yielded a number of suggestions for topics that the federal government could focus on for this year's National Child Day (November 20th.)

National Child Day Poster Contest

From the National Child Day Theme work, YDM got a chance to help the federal government select pictures to be used in the National Child Day Poster Campaign. Approximately 150 youth from across the country were consulted and the group's suggestions can be seen throughout Canada.



A World Fit For Children +5

Ashley Teo was one of the two YDM delegates who attended the World Fit for Children conference at the United Nations in New York in December 2007. She stressed the lack of respect

young people were treated with at the event and the need for a more youth friendly process. Based on her experience, in August of 2008 Ashley and Joseph, the second YDM member, had the opportunity to share their experiences and recommendations to the Canadian federal government on how to better engage youth at such events.

Resiliency: The Learning Partnership

What do young people think about resiliency and The Learning Partnership's definition? This was the question asked of the YDM in the summer and fall of 2008. Led by YDM members, youth conducted an online survey and five discussion groups in different communities allowing their peers to share their thoughts on the subject. YDM members reviewed notes and results and prepared presentations with key messages. Below is YDM member, Ronza's, experience.

"The National Dialogue on Resilience in Youth was held in Winnipeg between November 17th and the 19th, hosted by The Learning Partnership. Two youth, Desmond and Marilyn from Sandy Bay, Saskatchewan and myself [Ronza from Toronto] flew in to speak on a youth panel to present survey results taken from youth discussions. We were asked questions by our facilitator, Maria LeRose as well as the audience who were extremely keen on knowing anything they could from our experiences. The adults selected to speak were informed and left me even more encouraged to spread this message along."

Ontario Poverty Consultations

Recently the Ministry of Children and Youth Services wanted to understand better the issues that surround poverty in Ontario. They worked with the Young Decision Makers network to connect with youth from around the province, and ask them what they know and think about poverty today. We met with more than 110 youth between the ages of 10 and 24 from cities and towns in both northern and southern Ontario. These youth helped us show the Ministry what some of the current attitudes around poverty are, and developed a number of key areas for action that youth think government should focus on when they develop their strategies for addressing poverty in the coming years. These ideas helped influence a new strategy released by the Government of Ontario that can be found at <http://www.growingstronger.ca/>.

Ontario Youth-In-Care Consultations

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services asked us to tap into our Young Decision Makers network to work with youth living in and from care across Ontario, (youth living in group homes, treatment centres, foster homes, living independently with government support). We held five discussion groups across the province and worked with these youth to come up with concrete ideas to help youth transition out of care. A final report based on the young peoples input was written and submitted to the government.

Child Rights Monitoring Project

In the summer of 2008, 17 placement students working with The Students Commission of Canada in partner sites across Canada designed a survey for their peers across the country. They wanted to learn more about what Canada's youth know about children's rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Since the survey ended, young people have been involved in interpreting what the survey results have said, and have developed a series of tools to help share what we have all learned. When they're ready, these tools will be shared with young people, and youth-serving organizations across the country. Youth from seven provinces and two territories between the ages of 10 and 24 participated in this survey. Most of them were between 16 and 17 years old. We surveyed rural and urban youth, young people from care and custody, kids still in school, and those who are not in school. We talked to nearly 1500 Canadian youth, including First Nations, Inuit and Metis youth, 1st and 2nd generation Canadians and other young people with different life experiences.



Road to Rio (Winnipeg, Manitoba) and the Third World Congress Against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents - Rio de Janeiro

In October and November of 2008, members of the Young Decision Makers network, representing groups from across Canada participated in two global events. The first was held in Winnipeg and was a discussion on the theme of Global Corporate Social Responsibility against the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Here four youth from a national aboriginal women's association met with three youth from the YDM network to hash out what corporate social responsibility really means, and made some concrete recommendations that were taken to the Third World Congress Against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in November. The Congress was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and was host to more than 300 youth from around the world, and more than 2500 adults from organizations and governments working to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and youth globally. Three Canadian youth (one of whom was at the meeting in Winnipeg) participated in the Congress, and met with four young women from the same aboriginal women's association who were participating as well.

YDM NEEDS YOU!

The Young Decision Makers network is continually working to provide opportunities to its members and act as a “connector” between young people and formal decision makers

Mosquito

The Mosquito is an electronic device that emits high frequency sound waves intended only for young people between the ages of 13 and 25 to hear. It sounds like a mosquito and is an irritation to many while being painful to some.

It is intended to deter young people from places such as storefronts, shopping malls and schools after hours. The issue here for us is whether it's discriminatory of children's rights or is it a legitimate business practice?

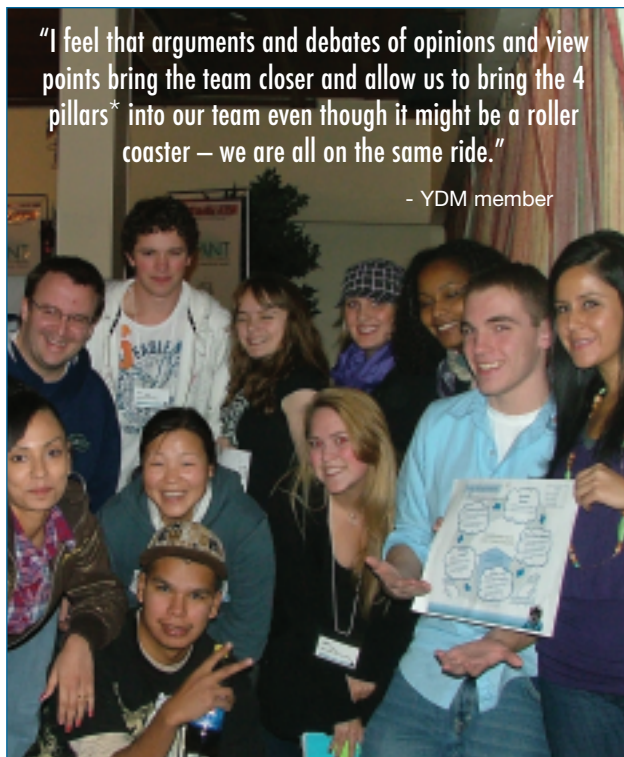
What can you do? Encourage youth to fill out the survey at the YDM website, host a discussion group about the Mosquito in your school or organization, write us a letter and tell us what you think about the Mosquito, or get involved with the group leading this process for YDM by e-mailing us at ydm@tgmag.ca!

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse is hoping to have young people participate as social media advisors to assist in the creation and evaluation of tools that will inform young people about substance abuse. Joe and Sandy were identified as YDM representatives on the CCSA Youth Substance Abuse Prevention group that will guide the CCSA. There is an opportunity to help inform and advise Joe and Sandy. Please contact us for more information for either opportunity.

Underserved Youth Forum

The Underserved Youth Forum is an opportunity for young people from across the country to understand how we learn and share knowledge around health and social issues. Underserved youth are those who cannot, or will not, access needed supports, or do not know about these supports. We are looking for 16 young people between the ages of 10 to 29 to become members of a Youth Advisory Committee that will help guide the Steering Committee that will organize the Forum. If you're interested in learning more or applying, please visit <http://www.tgmag.ca/underserved/join08.php>.



"I feel that arguments and debates of opinions and view points bring the team closer and allow us to bring the 4 pillars* into our team even though it might be a roller coaster — we are all on the same ride."

- YDM member

* The Students Commission's Four Pillars are Respect, Listen, Understand and Communicate*.

WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

Joining the network has several benefits for you:

- You are a part of a national body of youth, young adults and adult allies from across the country working collaboratively to ensure that youth voice is heard in formal and informal decision making bodies (governments, systems and organizations).
- You get a chance to go to exciting conferences and meetings across Canada to ensure youth have the opportunity to use their voice. You make friends across the country.
- YDM can be listed as valuable experience on your resumés and scholarship applications. There are always opportunities for young people to work on our websites, write reports, fill out questionnaires, help organize events, etc. YDM is a great place for you to practice and hone your skills.
- You get to express yourself! You are invited to address issues as diverse as the young people of Canada.
- You have access to young people who bring ideas, opinions and enthusiasm with them.

*

To join our network or to learn more about the YDM, contact us now!

Website: <http://ydm.engagementcentre.ca>

Phone: 416.597.8297

Email: ydm@tgmag.ca

The Students Commission, 23 Isabella St., Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1M7



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Youth Engagement

The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement leads the Young Decision Makers (YDM) project. **Key partners to date:** The Students Commission, TakingITGlobal, Brock University, Youth Launch, YouCAN, the McCreary Centre Society and the City of Vancouver.