

# **Youth City? You Decide.**

## **An Assessment Toolkit for Youth to Measure Youth Civic Engagement**

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# Executive Summary

Through the use of previous studies on youth civic engagement in Canada, and the framework provided by the Femmes et Ville report, we set out to build a self-assessment tool that measures the youth-friendliness of Canadian Municipalities. The self-assessment questionnaire has expanded into a toolkit, “Youth City? You Decide,” to be utilized by our NGO partners for distribution to civic committees and councils as well as youth-oriented groups. The purpose of our Toolkit is to help users understand how open their city is to youth ages 15-24. Our Toolkit looks at five indicators: Youth Voice, Youth Space, Cultural Identity, Social Responsibility, and Education and Learning. It also offers ideas for how youth can take action to promote positive social change in their communities. We also researched cities across Canada to assess the initiatives they have employed to enhance youth civic engagement and to highlight best practices.

## Our project goals:

- Analyze the current realities of youth engagement practices and identify where barriers to engagement exist.
- Create a questionnaire for self-assessment targeted to youth for them to evaluate their city based on key indicators.
- Provide youth with direction and resources to help them ‘take-action’ and work to improve their city’s level of youth-friendliness.

## Key Findings of Our Assessment Toolkit Beta-Test:

- The cities that graded most frequently in the A range in terms of each of our indicators included North Vancouver, Surrey, and Richmond
- The indicators, Youth Voice and Education and Learning, showed the most discrepancy in responses, with high ends of either a grade of A or F
- Grading inconsistencies between city gradings could be due our small Beta testing sample size and to individual respondents’ level of personal civic engagement and/or awareness and knowledge of city facilities and services

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## Our Assessment Toolkit Project

Youth engagement practices differ across Canada. Through this assessment toolkit project, we sought out to assess how cities across Canada currently serve their youth ages 15 – 24 and gathered best practices. These became the basis for our key indicators that assessed cities' youth-friendliness. In the first half of our report, you will find analyses of cities from Victoria to St. John's, and some of their best practices in terms of youth community and civic engagement. Following that, our report rationalizes the key indicators gathered from the city research and uses them as a foundation of our youth-friendliness assessment. Lastly, this assessment has been paired with 'take-action' recommendations and resources to create a toolkit, *Youth City? You Decide. A Toolkit for Youth*, geared towards youth participants.

## Summary of Previous Reports

Our research was guided by previous reports that have had a focus on youth and/or civic engagement. The report entitled “Youth, Power, and Municipal Politics: Agendas and Best Practices of Youth Political Civic Engagement in Canadian Cities” by SFU GSWS 318 student Dharra Budicha in the Summer of 2013 formed the basis of our examination of cities across Canada. Budicha focused on major city centres - Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal and the Halifax Regional Municipality. Her research looked at defining civic engagement and at how youth, ages 15 – 24, became an important political constituency.

In regards to choosing five cities for the report, Budicha stated, “first, because of the time limit, no more than five major Canadian municipalities could be researched and included in the report. A greater scope of Canadian cities, both large and small, would prove more representative and insightful to the overall project” (Budicha, 2013, p. 4). To compliment her work, we researched a mix of larger and smaller Canadian cities.

From the previous work of the Young Women Civic Leaders project, civic engagement has been defined as:

(1) narrowly, civic engagement involves participation in the context of city governance and municipal administration; (2) broadly, the term encompasses a wide range of ways in which citizens engage in their community in order to improve conditions for others or help shape the community’s future; and (3) generally, civic engagement connotes a form of democratic participation and being an active citizen on any level – local to global. (Budicha, 2013, p. 5)

We also modeled our assessment after the joint report, “A City Tailored to Women: The Role of Municipal Governments in Achieving Gender Equality” by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in cooperation with City of Montreal’s Femmes et Ville (Women in the City) Program and the International Centre for Municipal Development of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. This 2004 report investigated the structures and mechanism of an “Ideal” Women-Friendly City. We adopted this and their overall action-oriented style to guide the creation of our assessment toolkit.

# Cross-Canada Youth Engagement Analysis

## Victoria, British Columbia

Victoria, the capital city of British Columbia, has several organizations that work to facilitate greater youth civic engagement. There have been several reports on some of the project-specific initiatives that have had youth engagement at their core.

In 2013, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, in partnership with the University of Victoria, compiled a Youth Engagement Toolkit, which aims to support and straighten youth engagement practices (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2013). On top of the tool that allows you to measure the level of engagement in your city, the report also highlighted several key topics to help youth and adults' understanding on the benefits to youth engagement. The City of Victoria has also taken steps to improve civic engagement practices. Along with UBCM, they published a report in 2012 that introduces strategies and action plans to improve the city's overall engagement (UBCM, 2012).

Independent local organizations have not fallen behind on taking their own steps to contribute to civic engagement either. Non-profit organizations, like the Victoria Youth Empowerment Society and Leadership Victoria, have actively supported education programs that connect youth to healthy development opportunities. Organizations and programs like these allow youth to engage directly with their youth and adult peers. In early 2013, Leadership Victoria compiled its own youth leadership and engagement report, which highlighted the importance of youth engagement (Victoria Youth Leadership Coalition, 2013).

## Port Coquitlam, British Columbia

Port Coquitlam, one of the six cities researched for the Young Women Civic Leaders project, is located in Metro Vancouver. Youth are recognized as being an integral part of the city's community. This is reflected through the youth networks and programs that are supported by the municipality.

The City of Port Coquitlam has a Youth Council at City Hall, and the City of Coquitlam website has a user-friendly design that directs visitors to Youth Centres, Youth Services, Youth Week, and more. In 2010, Port Coquitlam held a youth event called "Youth Take Over," where members of the Youth Council took the place of the city's Mayor and Councillors during an official Council Meeting. This allowed the youth to bring forward issues that were important to them and to highlight the significance and importance of having a dedicated Youth Council supported by the city (City of Port Coquitlam, 2010).

In addition to the civic engagement initiatives, there is an official website under the city's Parks and Recreation sector called PocoYouth.com. This website is not only visually

appealing to a youth audience, it promotes the programs and services available for youth. It is an online resource for both youth and parents who want to be in the loop of what events are happening in the city, such as the annual Youth Week, and what upcoming programs and opportunities there are to get involved in the community.

## **Calgary, Alberta**

Calgary, the largest city in Alberta, has several youth programs operated by the city. Information about these programs can be found through simple Internet searches. Youth are able to choose the programs they want to get involved in and have options within their community of civic or other forms of engagement. For example, the youth-run organization YouthScape works with the city of Calgary and other local youth-empowerment organizations, to run community-based projects to sustain the city's youth operations (YouthScape, 2008)

One youth civic initiative, 'Mayor for a Day,' funded by the City of Calgary and Youth Central, challenges youth to submit proposals about what they think would benefit the lives of the citizens of Calgary (Youth Central, 2014). The winner of this challenge, as judged by City of Calgary staff, is invited to spend the day with the Mayor and has the opportunity to discuss the potential implementation of the winning proposal. Furthermore, CivicCamp, a volunteer-run project, aims to provide a space where everyone is heard. They also have a Mayor's Youth Civic Engagement Committee which meets monthly to discuss ideas (CivicCamp, 2014).

## **Edmonton, Alberta**

The City of Edmonton operates a Youth Council, the CEYC, with seven local youth serving on the executive board (CEYC, 2014). At their General Assembly meetings, approximately 50 community members attend.

On a smaller scale, Edmonton Immigration Services Association operates a Youth Civic Engagement Alliance (YCEA). While this alliance offers leadership training programs for new Canadians, it also empowers new citizens by giving them tools they need to participate within their community (i.e. assistance with voting registration). The YCEA also has programs such as one-on-one mentoring, where youth are paired with past or present City Councillors (EISA, 2014).

In February 2014, the Community-University Partnership for the study of Children, Youth, and Families organization (CUP) began a youth engagement project targeted towards high-risk and at-risk youth. The program has partnered with local non-profit organizations like The Boys & Girls Club and Alberta Health Services to identify what barriers exist for this demographic of youth. The CUP also holds community events to help educate the public about high and at-risk youth and what they can do to make positive changes (CUP, 2014).

## **Yellowknife, Northwest Territories**

Youth, ages 15-25, in the capital city of the Northwest Territories account for only approximately 14% of the total population as of 2012 (Statistics Canada, 2013). Because of the lack of post-secondary institutions province-wide, many youth move to other parts of Canada for studies after the age of 18. Formal education is often one of the factors that encourages youth into becoming involved in their communities, and the lack of educational options past the high school level impacts the amount of time and resources spent on youth programming.

There is little to no opportunity for youth to participate on the municipal level and there does not seem to be a focus on creating a more youth-friendly community. On the City of Yellowknife's website, there is a lack of information about youth initiatives and opportunities for youth engagement in the city (City of Yellowknife, 2014).

On the community level, there are organizations such as Youth Net NT, a community-based, youth-run mental health promotion program, and Northern Youth, a community leadership development program (Youth Net NT, 2014). These organizations work to pair youth with adult mentors to develop social networks and support systems. They have open dialogue sessions about issues that affect youth and hold workshops for personal development. Since the youth population drops after age 18, few programs and initiatives have been able to continue their offerings for youth over 18.

## **Brandon, Manitoba**

Brandon, Manitoba has a quite significant youth presence. 22% of the city's population is between 15 and 25 (Brandon University, 2011). On top of the many youth-operated organizations such as the Aboriginal Youth Council and Youth Activity Council, the local university, Brandon University, and the City of Brandon often conduct research on youth engagement in the city, developing reports almost every year analyzing the current state of youth, with strategies and methods for improvements.

Brandon University conducted reports in 2008 and 2011 on 'Youth Mobility in Manitoba' and 'Manitoba Youth Population' respectively, both in partnership with provincial youth officials and the Rural Development Institute, outline several key elements of youth participatory culture, such as family and community ties, and educational and economic opportunities (Brandon University, 2008 & 2011).

The City of Brandon also actively works to develop the youth culture. Its Community Services Department proposed a youth advisory council in 2012, giving youth the opportunity to connect with City Councillors and to help organize city events. Since 2012, youth activity centres and programs have been sustained, with its own website [brandonyouth.ca](http://brandonyouth.ca) acting as a youth portal. The City of Brandon Youth Plan, developed in



2009, is similar to the reports published by Brandon University, but has a focus on youth of the city. The plan outlines current practices in the city, conducted through a consultation process, recommendations based off best case practices across Canada, and an implementation strategy (City of Brandon, 2012).

## **London, Ontario**

London, home to the University of Western Ontario, is a mid-sized city of just over 366,000 that engages youth through political, economic and social community initiatives. The London Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) encourages youth to learn more about civic issues, municipal politics and developing a platform, since youth have to run and be elected to serve on the council.

The City of London has a Youth Community Economic Development Strategy (YCED), which has the goal to assist and encourage youth raised in London to pursue higher education or trades after successfully completing high school. Having youth that are engaged economically, through employment or higher education adds to the overall economic health and prosperity of the city.

Socially, London has two main initiatives: Real Voice: Agents of Change and London Youth in Philanthropy. Real Voice encourages youth to tackle issues that matter to them through the medium of film and then to share those pieces through social media. “Youth in Philanthropy” (YIP) is a more traditional community engagement initiative for youth, ages 13-25, and is facilitated by the London Community Foundation. This group of youth actively volunteers their time with community associations. YIP also acts as a junior branch of the foundation, administering grants and awards to deserving youth-oriented community projects and organizations.

## **Mississauga, Ontario**

Mississauga, located in the Greater Toronto Area, boasts the distinction of being named a “Youth-Friendly” community by PlayWorks: The Ontario Partnership for Active and Engaged Youth in 2012. To maintain and enhance their level of youth-friendliness, the administration has a civic committee called “Youth Movement: Make Mississauga “Youth Friendly” building on its 2009 declaration by the City Council to ensure the community is one open and accessible to young people.

Another long-standing civic engagement initiative is the Mississauga Youth Advisory Council (MYAC). The Council, founded in 1982 by Mayor Hazel McCallion, has two main functions: to host monthly networking events for youth, ages 14-24, and to facilitate youth representatives of civic bodies such as the library, schools and community centres through the Youth Assembly program (YA). Youth representatives of the YA are able to influence policy as they vote and debate issues affecting their city. Separately, the civic library

maintains its own Youth Advisory Council allowing younger residents of Mississauga a say in the programming and material at their local libraries.

The City of Mississauga has a youth employment portal on their website and the Mississauga Business Centre promotes a “My Summer Company” program to encourage entrepreneurship during the summer breaks from high school and university. Another youth-oriented web portal, maintained by the City, is a compendium of social services programs and community resources. It offers a wide variety of programs, services and initiatives aimed at their younger residents.

## **Ottawa, Ontario**

As our nation’s capital, Ottawa should be the lead community that sets the tone for developing best practices for youth civic engagement. Ottawa has taken steps to become that leader through concrete efforts to integrate youth not only at City Hall, but through other community engagement initiatives. Youth made up 14% of the population of almost 900,000 in 2011 and there has been a recent shift to recognize the agency of youth in the city. In 2013, Mayor Jim Watson hosted a Youth Summit with over 180 participants in order to generate discussions around topics of interest to young residents such as public safety, employment, entrepreneurship and civic engagement amongst others. The Summit resulted in the Youth Summit Action Plan, which was approved by City Council in May 2013.

The Ottawa Youth Commission (OYC), another youth engagement program, has been active since 2005 as the connector between Ottawa’s youth and City Hall. The commission hosts regular workshops and focus groups to discuss issues of concern for Ottawa’s youth. Youth then work in conjunction with City Hall to ensure that the municipal decision-makers hear their voice. The OYC has also partnered with a local non-profit organization, Youth Ottawa (YO). This partnership is mutually beneficial as YO’s mandate is to believe in youth and help them make positive change in their city.

Another civic initiative called “Youth on the Move,” links Parks and Recreation, Ottawa Bylaw, and the Ottawa Police Service. Teams from this joint group connect with youth to inform them about recreational and special event opportunities. They also tackle issues facing youth in the use of parks and civic facilities. By taking an on-the-ground approach to youth engagement in Ottawa, this group hopes to link agencies, business, and non-profits to the City and Ottawa’s youth to create a more youth-friendly environment.

## **Laval, Quebec**

As the largest suburb of Montreal, Laval has a population of just over 400,000 making it the third largest metropolitan area in the province. Youth, ages 15-25, make up approximately 13% of the population with 53,000 residents in this demographic. On the city’s website, there is a prominent link on the homepage to information for young adults

as well as a photo encouraging youth to apply for summer jobs with the city. The youth page holds links for Education, Events and Festivals, Sports and Leisure Activities, Student Job Opportunities and Internships, Transport and Wi-Fi. While the city has identified youth as a key constituent group and has even taken the effort to identify key areas of interest to youth, it appears that Laval does little to engage youth in civic affairs beyond offering them information.

## **Cape Breton, Nova Scotia**

After Halifax, Cape Breton is ranked as the next largest municipal area in the province of Nova Scotia with a population of over 101,000. This regional municipality is starting to make strides in the area of youth engagement and is currently in the exploratory stages. While some villages and small towns in Nova Scotia like Amherst and Parrsboro already have youth advisory councils attached to their town halls, Cape Breton is looking further into the idea of youth civic engagement. The regional municipality is conducting a civic review called *Reorganization Plan for Positive Change*. Through this reorganization plan, the council under the leadership of Mayor Cecil Clarke is designating some meetings as youth-focused meetings to discuss issues of importance to young adults in the community. In an effort to reach a wider audience, the meetings have been streamed live on the municipality's website. The first meeting was held this past November and the mandate of the meeting was two-fold: firstly, to gather ideas from youth of their vision for Cape Breton and secondly, to discuss relevant parts of the civic strategic plan. The issues for discussion included the establishment of youth and recreation services, transit passes and routing to cover educational institutions, employment access for youth and skills development, and funding for youth and family projects.

## **St. John's, Newfoundland**

St. John's is the second largest metropolitan area in the Maritimes with a population of just over 200,000. The city has been active in youth engagement over the last 15 years starting with a Task Force on Youth. Created as a response to high incidence of youth crime and vandalism in the late '90s, the Task Force on Youth sought to understand the interests of youth living in the region, to evaluate current programs and services offered to this demographic, and to investigate the barriers that exist to youth engagement. Out of the recommendations from this task force came the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Youth (M.A.C.Y) with the goal of ensuring that the opinions of local youth are heard by city council.

Youth, ages 12 to 18, have access to a wide range of programming from sports to arts and culture from the City's Parks and Recreation department. The city promotes youth talent competitions, youth leadership and recreation, skills development and gender-based programming to get girls involved in sports and leadership. Of note is the Youth Sport Leader program, which combines recreation with leadership training to encourage young adults to become leaders, coaches, mentors and positive members of their sports

community. By using sports to bridge youth into the community, the City is creating healthier communities.

Since 2000, the City has promoted National Youth Week to residents' aged 12 to 18. Youth Week is the first week in May and has been celebrating the achievements of youth in communities across Canada since 1995. St. John's has organized events such as art exhibits, dances, recreation events and special events such as a Carnival. To cap off the week, the city recognizes the Youth of the Year through an award that seeks to recognize the outstanding achievement of an exemplary youth in St. John's. Recipients are evaluated by their peers and community partners, on their contributions to improving the quality of life in St. John's through their involvement in extracurricular activities, philanthropy and community work.

# Best Practices of Youth Engagement Across Canada

Our cities analysis showed some communities that demonstrated an amazing level of general youth engagement while others lacked opportunities, platforms, and facilities that give their young people a voice. To highlight some of the best practices across Canada, we have divided existing youth initiatives and opportunities into the five selected indicators for our assessment toolkit.

## Youth Voice

Edmonton definitely has one of the most well-established and well-heard youth councils across Canada that allows young people to speak out and voice their opinions about matters in the community. The City of Edmonton Youth Council (CEYC) has an extensive application process to members who want to attend monthly General Assemblies (GA). This can be somewhat limiting to those who want to sit-in and/or have a less-flexible schedule. However, the committee does have an organized rapport, working with the city council, municipal government, and other civic committees to make sure that what goes on at a GA is always heard. Currently, there are 35-50 people on the GA, with an Executive team of seven elected members (CEYC, 2014).

Complete with an official mandate, mission, and annual goals, the council certainly has established a professional reputation in the youth community, and has given the city a reason to take their concerns seriously. The project is fully supported by the City of Edmonton. Its online activity extends to its Facebook and Twitter accounts as well, giving youth who may not have time to dedicate to GA's a chance to speak out and connect.

## Youth Space

In St. John's, Newfoundland, the City's Parks and Recreation department offers a wide range of programming in sports and arts and culture to youth, ages 12 to 18. This ensures a wide range of programming aimed at this demographic. The city promotes youth talent competitions, youth leadership and recreation, skills development and gender-based programming to get girls involved in sports and leadership. What makes the Parks and Recreation department stand out for the Youth Space indicator is the city's Youth Sport Leader program which combines recreation with leadership training to encourage young adults to become leaders, coaches, mentors and positive members of their sports associations and teams. This, in turn, creates healthier communities by using sports to bridge youth and their city.

## Cultural Identity

Socially, London has two main initiatives: Real Voice: Agents of Change and London Youth in Philanthropy. Real Voice encourages youth to tackle issues that matter to them through the medium of film and to then share these pieces through social media. Through this “neighbourhood action project”, like-minded individuals can connect and produce videos to stimulate conversations in their community. Recent topics covered included the immigrant experience, stereotypes, racism and leadership. Moreover, the participants develop leadership and employment skills. By having youth tell their stories and tackle social issues relevant to them, this program enables youth to share their identities and represent themselves to a wider community.

A more traditional community engagement initiative for youth, ages 13-25, is a branch of the London Community Foundation called “Youth in Philanthropy”. This group is engaged at the field-level volunteering in community associations. It also acts as a junior branch of the foundation that issues grants and awards to deserving youth-oriented community projects and organizations. Both initiatives create a strong sense of community amongst London’s youth, making these a best practice for other Canadian cities.

## Social Responsibility

A city that does a great job in creating a central platform for youth to access resources for involvement is Port Coquitlam. The city’s online platform, PocoYouth.com, is a well established and updated website that acts as an all-in-one resource centre for youth of all ages ([www.pocoyouth.com](http://www.pocoyouth.com), 2014). Funded by the City of Port Coquitlam, this website provides links to different organizations and events across the city that encourages youth to get involved through recreational activities, after-school programs, sports and fitness and more.

One of the key features on the website is the city’s annual Youth Week, where outstanding youth are recognized for their efforts in the community. Aside from PocoYouth.com, Port Coquitlam also takes part every year in the Tri-Cities REACH (Recognizing Efforts and Achievements Across Community & Home) Awards which recognize the contributions of youth, youth groups, businesses and organizations, and adult mentors who help make communities youth friendly (City of Port Coquitlam, 2013). The city clearly goes to great measures to recognize the contributions youths have on the community.

With a strong online presence, easily-navigable resource centre, and well-established recognition programs, the City of Port Coquitlam stands as a role model for introducing social responsibility to its youth community and sustaining its operations for future improvements.

## Education and Learning

By empowering youth to seek election on the London Youth Advisory Council (LYAC), the City of London meets our best practice criteria for the education and learning indicator. LYAC mirrors the city council by having youth residents, ages 15-25, seek a nomination in their ward and run for election on the 13-seat council. Youth who participate in these elections learn a great deal about civic issues, municipal politics and developing a platform. One of the aims of LYAC is to create a culture of engaged citizens by educating active youth. This group of youth then advocate for local issues of concern in the community and in the creation of public policies. The city created this youth advisory council in order to counter apathy towards politics by engaging teenage and young adult residents in the decision-making process in a meaningful way. Empowering youth by making them advocates and politicians as well as using youth-oriented communications strategies such as social media make the LYAC a leader in youth advisory council models. Youth in this committee are well supported by city councilors staff, a Board of Directors and a volunteer team. All of these indicate a high level of investment by the city in ensuring they are a “youth-city”.

## Overview of Assessment Toolkit Development

There is no question that the youth are the future. Ensuring that every community gives youth the essentials they need to develop into upstanding and contributing members of their city benefits all. These essentials include channels for the voice of youth to be heard, dedicated spaces for youth to play and grow, youth events that show cultural diversity and respect, opportunities and support for youth to become involved in their community and education and learning facilities to help youth learn about their city. A community that provides youth support, freedom and space has been shown to have less crime and more post-secondary graduates, with fewer depending on social services (PlayWorks, 2013). Built upon this strong youth-engaged foundation, communities will be healthy and robust ones that will develop today's youth into tomorrow's leaders.



## Explanation of Indicators

In order to guide the questions for our Assessment Toolkit, we narrowed our focus of youth engagement down to five key indicators: Youth Voice, Youth Space, Cultural Identity, Social Responsibility, and Education and Learning. We feel these areas represent a good cross-section of services and opportunities cities may provide for their youth (age 15 – 24). These indicators also have a direct link between youth and their level of engagement and connectedness with their city. Rating cities by these specific areas will help to inform youth on where their cities are doing well and where they could use improvement around youth involvement, engagement, and friendliness.

### Youth Voice

The “youth voice” deserves to be heard. Youth have opinions but may not have accessible outlets where they can share them, or more importantly, youth may not be aware of the ways they can speak up. Asking youth to think about the ways they can communicate with their city will ideally motivate them to become more involved. Youth may be more active in sharing their voice if they know how and where they can be heard.

### Youth Space

Dedicated “youth spaces” are places where youth can be with others their own age. Ideally these places are safe, affordable, and inclusive, giving youth the opportunity to feel connected with the space they are in, the people they are with and overall, the city they live in. When youth feel connected, they are more likely to get involved. These positive youth spaces offer peer engagement, which can give youth the strong social bonds they should have and a network of support they can turn to when needed.

### Cultural Identity

Cities can give people a sense of belonging. The city they live in, work in, and get involved in becomes a part of who they are, a part of their identity. Just like they may feel like they belong to a specific cultural group and associate themselves with that cultural identity, youth have their own cultural identity and it is important for cities to recognize and celebrate this. If youth feel like they belong and are recognized by their city, they may be more inclined to become more actively involved. Asking youth about what their city does to make youth in general feel like they belong can provide insight as to the “youth-friendliness” of their city.

## **Social Responsibility**

Youth are growing up in a world that is greatly aware of the need to be socially responsible. Youth need to be provided with opportunities to be socially proactive and get involved with their city. A “youth-friendly” city should recognize this need and provide ways to reach out to youth with options on how they can participate and be socially responsible. These opportunities may include having volunteer, work, and leadership programs for youth along with direct mentorships. By helping guide youth towards ways they can contribute to their city, these youth will be given the experience they need to become strong leaders in their communities.

## **Education and Learning**

Most youth spend the majority of their time within educational institutions. High schools and post-secondary programs can have strong influence on their youth population. It is important for cities to collaborate with these institutions to provide youth with opportunities to expand their knowledge of their city and the importance of getting involved. The more youth see the personal and social value of community participation, the more likely they are to learn more about how they, themselves, can become an active force for change.

## Assessment Toolkit Revisions

Our assessment design has undergone two revisions to come to a final edition as seen in Appendix A.

Our first design was based on indicators we adopted from other reports (see Appendix B). The questions lined up with the following topics: youth voice, spaces, cultural diversity, transportation and safety, leadership and recognition, and civic and community engagement. The indicators were not listed as headings and demographic information was collected about the youth filling out the survey. Some questions could be answered by checking off several options while others could be answered via a “Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree” scale.

We received feedback on the design and functionality from our professor, Catherine Murray, two youth workers, and a student in the Child and Youth Care program at the University of Victoria. We were told that it was difficult for the reader of our assessment questions to determine what the questions were really asking them. Additionally, there was no introduction to our project, or reasons why there was an assessment in the first place. The feedback we received allowed us to modify our format.

In our second version, we added an introduction to the beginning of the assessment outlining the purpose of the questions, an empowerment tool for youth to rate their city or community, as well as the research purposes of the Young Women Civic Leaders. We also changed the scaling questions to a different layout to accumulate more quantitative information. Moreover, certain questions were rephrased to be more community-based and certain indicators had questions added on.

We chose to give our second version of the assessment to our peers, the other members of the Young Women Civic Leaders. We felt that they would be the best people to give us feedback on our design and suitability for youth as they have also done extensive research about youth. Their comments were helpful in deciding that our format had too many questions and that the scaled questions were difficult to answer. Also, we did not identify which questions provided results to which indicator, making our survey very difficult to grade, and not suitable for a self-evaluation.

Our third and final version of the assessment took after the ‘Yes/No’ style of the report, “A City Tailored to Women The Role of Municipal Governments in Achieving Gender Equality”. This version of the assessment reduced the amount of time needed to fill out the form. We provided our readers with simple statements to either agree or disagree with and we grouped the questions by the indicators we wanted to look at. Furthermore, this allowed us to create a straightforward grading scheme. A grade is awarded for each set of questions. A city gets an A for a section, if it has 5 “Yes’s”, a B for a section, if it has 4 “Yes’s”, a C for a section, if it has 3 “Yes’s”, and an F for a section, if it has 0-2 “Yes’s”.

With this finalized assessment, we were able to conduct beta testing, sending the entire assessment toolkit to local youth and youth living in the cities that we researched.

## Beta Testing Analysis

Upon completion of the draft of our “Youth City? You Decide.” toolkit, we conducted a beta test. We sent our toolkit to youth around Metro Vancouver as well as to the youth organizations and councils we reached out to for our city research. We asked for participants to not only complete our assessment, but to provide us with feedback on the structure of the assessment toolkit itself. We asked participants to identify the city that they were assessing, strictly for categorizing city grades.

We received results from youth in the following cities:

*Abbotsford, Anmore, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Kamloops, Langley, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Ottawa, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, West Vancouver.*

We spoke to the following youth organizations:

*Burnaby Youth Hub, Surrey Youth Street Squad, Girl Guides of Port Coquitlam, Surrey Teen Advisory Groups, London Youth Advisory Council, Ottawa Youth Commission, Coquitlam East and West Youth Program Committee and Councils, Port Coquitlam Youth Advisory Council, Port Moody Youth Focus Committee.*

The results from our beta test show that the cities of North Vancouver, Surrey, and Richmond, received A grades more frequently than other cities. However, we found that the grades were not consistent from participant to participant, with some cities receiving both A's and F's for the same indicator. One reason for this may be the individual respondents' personal civic engagement and/or awareness and knowledge of city facilities and services. Another may include our beta testing sample size.

Either youth or city administrators and councillors may utilize our toolkit. For youth, this can be used as an individual self-assessment tool within a larger high school, college or university course or group. Youth are given the resources to obtain information about their city or civic politics and possibly take further action to become more engaged. Building upon this idea, our toolkit may be used by a youth-oriented group in a community to assess their municipal knowledge and then, to take action as a group to better educate themselves or work on civic-oriented projects.

From a city administrator's or councillor's perspective, our toolkit could serve as a basis for a youth engagement outreach project that would get youth participating as well as providing the city with key data from this demographic. The results would show how youth feel about their city's level of youth-friendliness. Our five indicators would give the city an idea of the specific areas where youth feel more could be done to accommodate them.

## Final Thoughts and Next Steps

It is essential for further steps to be taken to bring this project to its full potential. While we have laid the foundation for an Assessment Toolkit, there are a few developments it needs to be fully effective with the youth demographic. Since our target audience is between the ages of 15 and 24, the questions would be more engaging if the toolkit was visually interactive with the respondent. This could be done through the addition of flash or 3D animations. Moreover, to initially pique their interest, the toolkit could be designed to mirror current pop culture. For example, as the majority of youth enjoy comics (i.e. Marvel movies such as Captain America and Spiderman), a superhero theme may catch their eye. Likewise, the toolkit could also be more attractive to youth if made into a mobile app (as smartphones currently see large volumes of Internet traffic among this demographic). If this toolkit is turned into a simple game with the questions incorporated into it, not unlike recent favorites such as Angry Birds or Flappy Bird, it may begin to “trend” among youth and become popular. This phenomenon reinforces the youth attitude of doing what their peers are doing, to remain “cool” or “fashionable”. If this toolkit is fun, easy to use and incorporated on social platforms that youth are already highly integrated with, it will see full youth participation and dissemination.

This dissemination can also be done by hosting the toolkit on a website. Currently, JES has launched their own website, [www.youthcity.ca](http://www.youthcity.ca), which would be an excellent place for youth to find this empowerment tool. Moreover, city youth websites can also serve as a central place for easy access for youth.

Lastly, in order to follow the progress and impact of this toolkit, a community partner should become the project lead. This role would include monitoring current toolkit use and effectiveness, ensuring youth feedback can be taken into account for any toolkit revisions, making efforts to optimize toolkit exposure and accessibility to youth and continually update the ‘Take Action’ suggestions with new and current city opportunities and facilities.

# Appendix A

## Youth City? You Decide. A Toolkit for Youth

### DRAFT

# YOUTH CITY? YOU DECIDE.

## A Toolkit for Youth

Youth make up an important and essential part of a city and/or community. This toolkit includes a questionnaire, Youth City? You Decide., that enables youth to grade their city and/or community on how accessible and open it is to the youth demographic, which is defined as all those between the ages of 15 and 24. Enabling youth to evaluate the level of “youth-friendliness” will help advocate for greater youth engagement in municipalities across the country. It is time for youth to have a tool to empower themselves and take action towards a brighter future.

The following questionnaire focuses on 5 key aspects of youth-friendliness that would be ideal in every city. These are Youth Voice, Youth Space, Cultural Identity, Social Responsibility, and Education and Learning. Youth are asked a number of questions under each indicator and the number of “Yes’s” per section determine the “grade” for that indicator. A high number of “Yes’s” gives a good score and vice versa. This toolkit also provides suggestions for youth to take action and to improve/sustain the youth culture of their city and their community.

**The goal of this toolkit is: to empower youth and give them the tools they need to take action in their city.**

Respondents should each receive the full questionnaire containing 25 yes/no questions, and one open-ended question. After answering the questions, respondents can then grade their questionnaire. Following our grading scheme, they will assign a grade to their city for each of the five indicators. Based on the grades they give, they can refer to our Take Action section to get some ideas on how they can go forward and become active or more active in their city.

How connected are youth to their city?  
Are there safe, affordable, inclusive spaces where youth can be with their peers?  
Does your city offer programs for youth to become more involved with the community?  
Are there safe, affordable, inclusive spaces where youth can be with their peers?  
How connected are youth to their city?  
Does your city offer programs for youth to become more involved with the community?  
How well are youth able to communicate with their city?  
Are youth encouraged to learn about their city and the opportunities available to them?

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## How to score your questionnaire:

The questionnaire's 5 sections highlight different areas where city's should be keeping youth in mind through the planning and implementation of new projects and city initiatives.

For each indicator, count how many times you selected "Yes" as your answer, write your answer in the space below.

You will have a score out of 5 for each section.

**Youth Voice:** How well are youth able to communicate with their city?

**Youth Space:** Are there safe, affordable, inclusive spaces where youth can be with their peers?

**Cultural Identity:** How connected are youth to their city?

**Social Responsibility:** Does your city offer programs for youth to become more involved with the community?

**Education and Learning:** Are youth encouraged to learn about their city and the opportunities available to them?

**5 out of 5:** Your city receives an A in this area. Your city is taking a "youth-friendly" approach to this indicator area. Look for ways you can get involved and keep the city accountable for their options available to youth. The Take Actions recommendations can point you in the right direction.

**4 out of 5:** Your city receives a B in this area. Youth are appreciated, valued, and considered important. While this area of focus in your city may not be completely "youth-friendly", your city is doing an above average job. Look at the Take Action recommendations and see what you can do to help increase your city's score.

**3 out of 5:** Your city receives a C in this area. There is room for improvement, but overall, your city does keep youth in mind. Your city is aware of the needs of youth, but could benefit from a more active push towards making the city more "youth-friendly". The Take Action recommendations can give you ideas and examples of ways to encourage cities to become friendlier to youth.

**0 - 2 out of 5:** Your city receives an F in this area. Changes are needed in this area for it to be considered "youth-friendly". Your city needs to be reminded that youth are deserving of high quality opportunities. If you are unsure where to begin, look at the Take Action recommendations.

<b>YOUTH VOICE</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1	Gives opportunities for youth to speak up		
2	Has a dedicated youth council and/or youth positions on City Council		
3	Has town-hall meetings where youth are welcome		
4	Consults youth on issues that concern/affect youth		
5	Uses social media to connect with youth (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)		
<b>YOUTH SPACE</b>			
6	Has more than 5 spaces for youth (i.e. skate parks, aquatic centres, sports fields/facilities, libraries, arts and community centres, etc.)		
7	Has a youth-orientated website		
8	Has after-school/weekend drop-in centres		
9	Has youth-employment centres		
10	Has youth spaces that are safe, affordable and inclusive		
<b>CULTURAL IDENTITY</b>			
11	Has a Youth Day/Week		
12	Celebrates different cultures		
13	Treats the youth with respect		
14	Has free events for youth		
15	Makes everyone feel included through public events		
<b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</b>			
16	Encourages youth to get involved		
17	Has ways for youth to get involved (i.e. sports, arts, music, theatre, etc.)		
18	Recognizes outstanding youth		
19	Has a youth mentorship program (i.e. Big Brothers and Sisters, etc.)		
20	Has youth job/volunteer fairs		
<b>EDUCATION AND LEARNING</b>			
21	Encourages youth to learn about how the city makes decisions		
22	Invites youth for visits to city hall		
23	Encourages youth to vote		
24	Has programs to educate youth on green living (i.e. recycling, Earth Day, etc.)		
25	Has scholarships/awards specifically for youth		
<b>WHAT DO YOU THINK?</b>			
26	My city would be more “youth friendly” if...		



**DRAFT**

# YOUTH CITY? YOU DECIDE.

**Time to Take Action!**

## YOUTH VOICE

- Investigate if your city has a youth advisory council and/or a civic committee related to youth issues. If it doesn't, talk to City Hall about starting one.
- Find out if your city allows youth representatives on its standing committees. If it does not, speak with your City Councillors about opening committees to youth reps.
- Encourage your city to start a youth page on Facebook, a Twitter account for youth in your city or an Instagram account to help develop an online youth community.
- Speak to your Mayor or City Councillors about starting a youth conference or summit to consult youth about civic issues of importance to your peer group.

## EDUCATION AND LEARNING

- Suggest a school project about civic issues, a field trip to City Hall, or mock election, mimicking what is happening in your community.
- Find out how you can volunteer on political campaigns or work an election to better understand the electoral process.
- Does your city have a youth electoral awareness campaign? Get involved with that or start one through the elections office.
- Listen to your local radio station that covers civic politics and read your local newspaper to enhance your knowledge and understanding of issues within your community.

## CULTURAL IDENTITY

- If your city doesn't have a youth week, form a committee and start one.
- If your city celebrates youth week, attend those events and encourage your friends to join you.
- Find out what your city does for new immigrants. Get involved with a multicultural organization.
- New to Canada yourself? Get involved with settlement programs oriented towards new immigrants.

For more information and additional resources, go to: ([www.youthcity.ca](http://www.youthcity.ca)?)

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## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Search for organizations that have youth mentorship programs.
- Look for volunteer fairs in your community. Also, visit your local volunteer centre to look for opportunities.
- Apply for local youth awards or nominate a friend for one.
- Look for youth leadership or engagement programs. Ask around to see where programs are offered.

## YOUTH SPACE

- Look for youth drop-in times, special events, and recreation events at civic facilities such as community centres, pools and libraries.
- Talk to programmers at the civic facilities about the importance of low-cost programs for youth and drop-in activities.
- See if your municipality has a youth-oriented website; if not, write to your Mayor and City Councillors about the importance of starting one.
- Look for youth employment centres or employment centres that run youth programs in your civic area. If there isn't one, speak up to City Hall!

Indicator	What Youth Can Do	Resources
<b>Youth Voice</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth council</li> <li>- Youth and civic politics</li> <li>- Youth and city connect via social media</li> <li>- City consultations with youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigate if your city has a youth advisory council or civic committee related to youth issues. If it doesn't talk to city hall, about starting one.</li> <li>- Find out if your city allows youth representatives on its standing committees, if it does not, speak with your city councillors about opening committees to youth reps.</li> <li>- Encourage your city to start a youth page on Facebook; a twitter account for youth in your city or an Instagram account.</li> <li>- Speak to your Mayor or City Councillors about starting a youth conference or summit to consult youth about civic issues of importance to your peer group.</li> </ul>	<p>Examples of Youth Councils in Canada:  <a href="http://www.nlyouth.ca/Resources/Municipalities.html">http://www.nlyouth.ca/Resources/Municipalities.html</a></p>
<b>Youth Spaces</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City facilities for youth or youth-oriented spaces</li> <li>- Youth website</li> <li>- Accessible spaces for youth</li> <li>- Drop-in centres</li> <li>- Youth employment centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Look for youth drop-in times, special events, and recreation events at civic facilities such as community centres, pools and libraries</li> <li>- Talk to programmers at the civic facilities about the importance of low-cost programs for youth and drop-in activities</li> <li>- See if your municipality has a youth-oriented website; if not, write to your mayor and</li> </ul>	<p>City Jobs:  <a href="http://www.civicjobs.ca/index.asp">http://www.civicjobs.ca/index.asp</a>  Federal Youth Employment Programs:  <a href="http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/audiences/youth/employment.shtml">http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/audiences/youth/employment.shtml</a>  BC Employment Programs:  <a href="http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Build-Your-Career/Planning-Your-Career/Starting-and-Planning-">http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Build-Your-Career/Planning-Your-Career/Starting-and-Planning-</a></p>

	<p>city councillors about the importance of starting one.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer to start a youth website and social media advisory group in your city</li> <li>- Look for youth employment centres or employment centres that run youth programs in your civic area. if there isn't one, speak up to city hall!</li> <li>- Look out for job fairs in your municipality or city</li> <li>- Look for youth jobs within your community at city hall, community centres, libraries or with parks and recreation.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Your-Career/BC-Employment-Programs.aspx</a></p> <p>Provincial Youth Engagement Scan  <a href="http://bchealthycommunities.ca/res/download.php?id=961">http://bchealthycommunities.ca/res/download.php?id=961</a></p>
<b>Cultural Identity</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth week events</li> <li>- Celebrates and includes all youth</li> <li>- Multiculturalism</li> <li>- Respect for youth in community</li> <li>- Affordable events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If your city doesn't have a youth week, form a committee and start one.</li> <li>- If your city celebrates youth week, attend those events and encourage your friends to join you. This reinforces to the city the importance of youth-oriented events.</li> <li>- Find out what your city does for new immigrants. Get involved with a multicultural organization.</li> <li>- New to Canada yourself? Get involved with settlement programs oriented towards new immigrants.</li> </ul>	<p>Settlement Services New Youth:  <a href="http://www.newyouth.ca/immigration/settlement-services/youth-and-civic-engagement">http://www.newyouth.ca/immigration/settlement-services/youth-and-civic-engagement</a></p>
<b>Social Responsibility</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage youth community involvement -</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does your city have a community foundation?</li> <li>- Seek out volunteer fairs in</li> </ul>	

<p>recognizes outstanding youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth programs</li> <li>- Mentorship programs</li> <li>- Job/volunteer fairs</li> </ul>	<p>your community or educational institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Go to your local volunteer centre to look for community volunteer opportunities</li> <li>- Apply for local youth awards or nominate a friend for one</li> <li>- Look out for youth leadership or engagement programs. School counsellors, community youth coordinators/workers, and your parents may be aware.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Education and Learning</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education about civic politics for youth</li> <li>- Electoral education for youth</li> <li>- Youth tours/events at city hall</li> <li>- Youth education programs</li> <li>- Youth awards/scholarships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suggest to your social studies teachers to start a mock election for municipal elections</li> <li>- Suggest a field trip to city hall or that a city councillor come and speak to your social studies class</li> <li>- Suggest a school project, community service learning or co-op about or with a civic body.</li> <li>- Attend a City Hall meeting</li> <li>- Find out if you can volunteer on political campaigns or work an election to better understand the electoral process</li> <li>- Does your city have a youth electoral awareness campaign? Get involved with that or start one through the elections office.</li> <li>- Use open source data to find out more about your local civic politics</li> <li>- Listen to the local radio that</li> </ul>	<p>Open Source Data:  <a href="http://opennorth.ca/">http://opennorth.ca/</a></p>

	<p>covers civic politics to build your understanding of issues within your community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read the local newspapers that cover city hall to build your knowledge.</li> </ul>	
<b>General Resources</b>		
	<p>Young Women</p> <p>Guide for Cities &amp; Organizations on Youth Engagement and working with Youth of Diverse Backgrounds</p> <p>Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement</p> <p>Document Library on Youth Engagement Theory, Strategies and Spaces</p>	<p>YWCA Canada Youth Civic Engagement Toolkit  <a href="http://ywcacanada.ca/data/documents/00000334.pdf">http://ywcacanada.ca/data/documents/00000334.pdf</a></p> <p>MCFD - BC Youth Engagement Toolkit  <a href="http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth_engagement/pdf/yet_resource_guide.pdf">http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth_engagement/pdf/yet_resource_guide.pdf</a></p> <p>The Student's Commission  <a href="http://www.studentscommission.ca/aorg/index_e.php">http://www.studentscommission.ca/aorg/index_e.php</a></p> <p>Youth Core Resource Documents  <a href="http://youthcore.ca/index.php?action=resources">http://youthcore.ca/index.php?action=resources</a></p>
<b>City Resources</b>		
	<p>Ottawa - Youth City for Everyone</p> <p>Calgary</p> <p>National Outlook</p>	<p><a href="http://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents.ottawa.ca/files/documents/youth_en.pdf">http://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents.ottawa.ca/files/documents/youth_en.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="http://youthcore.ca/download.php?id=96">http://youthcore.ca/download.php?id=96</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.icicp.org/resource-library/icp-publications/global-youth-service-database/americas/north-america/canada/">http://www.icicp.org/resource-library/icp-publications/global-youth-service-database/americas/north-america/canada/</a></p>

## Appendix B

### Foundation for Our Indicators

Source Report and Author	Indicator Support
<p>A City Tailored to Women <i>The Role of Municipal Governments in Achieving Gender Equality</i></p> <p>Written by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in cooperation with City of Montreal's Femmes et ville (Women in the City) Program and the International Centre for Municipal Development of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities</p>	<p>Youth Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth council</li> </ul> <p>Youth Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rigid operating hours of municipal services, poorly adapted public transportation, unsafe public places</li> </ul> <p>Cultural Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Treats youth with respect</li> <li>- Youth events</li> </ul> <p>Education and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth vote</li> </ul>
<p>Youth, Power, and Municipal Politics: Agendas and Best Practices of Youth Political Civic Engagement in Canadian Cities</p> <p>Written by Dharra Budicha as a part of her contribution in 2013 to the Simon Fraser University course, Young Women Civic Leaders (GSWS 318)</p>	<p>Youth Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use social media to connect with youth, using youth language</li> <li>- Youth councils</li> </ul> <p>Youth Space</p> <p>Cultural Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Treats youth with respect</li> <li>- Youth events</li> </ul> <p>Education and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Politics disconnected from youth</li> <li>- Civic hands-on learning in schools</li> </ul>
<p>Real Voice Project Evaluation Summary</p> <p>Written by The Boys &amp; Girls Club of London, Ontario and the City Of London, Ontario</p>	<p>Youth Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having a voice in the community</li> </ul> <p>Youth Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expressing their ideas, talents, and skills</li> <li>- Recreational spaces in neighbourhoods including basketball courts, skate parks, soccer fields, etc</li> <li>- Having safe communities</li> <li>- Spaces and places for young people to hang out, get involved, learn new things</li> </ul> <p>Cultural Identity</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feeling included, valued and respected</li> <li>- Having diversity in neighbourhoods and communities to build inclusive communities</li> <li>- Challenging negative stereotypes people may have about young people and neighbourhoods</li> </ul> <p>Social Responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference</li> </ul> <p>Education and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taking care of the environment and green spaces in neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
<p>2013 Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program</p>	<p>Youth Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth councils</li> </ul> <p>Youth Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilities are dedicated to youth play</li> <li>- Easy to find youth event information</li> </ul> <p>Cultural Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth feel valued by community</li> <li>- Community supports public youth events</li> <li>- Youth play is inclusive</li> </ul> <p>Social Responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community supports youth volunteerism and leadership development</li> </ul> <p>Education and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community celebrates and recognizes youth</li> <li>- Schools support the youth-friendly approach</li> </ul>

# Appendix C

## Assessment Toolkit Previous Versions and Feedback

### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE Version 1

#### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (used for statistical purposes only):

1. What age range are you in?
  - 15-18
  - 19-25+
2. Which gender do you identify with?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Transgender
3. Who do you live with?
  - With parents
  - With roommates
  - With relatives
  - With spouse/partner
  - Alone
4. What is your work status?
  - Full-time
  - Part-time
  - Seasonally
  - I do not work
5. What level of education have you achieved or are currently pursuing?
  - High School
  - Post Secondary
  - Trades/Apprentice program
  - Other, please specify:.....

#### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS

6. Does your city have dedicated youth spaces for young people to hang out, get involved, and learn new things and play?
  - Yes
    - If yes, what types of spaces (check all that apply):
      - Basketball or tennis courts
      - Skate parks
      - Soccer fields
      - Arts and drama spaces
      - Dance spaces
      - Community centres
      - Libraries
      - After-school programs
      - Youth-employment centres



- Other, please specify:.....
- No
- I don't know

7. Does your city embrace diversity and make everyone feel included through multicultural events?

- Yes
  - If yes, how does your city do so, please specify:
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
- No
  - If no, why not?
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
- I don't know

8. Does your community have ways to hear and listen to youth's opinions?

- Yes
  - If yes, who attends, who is listening?
  - High School Students
  - University Students
  - Parents
  - City Councillors
  - City Staff Representatives
  - The Mayor
  - Teachers/School Counsellors
  - Other, please specify:.....
- No
- I don't know

9. How does your city make the community aware of security concerns? (Check all that apply)

- Newspapers
- Radio
- School newsletter
- Television
- E-mail
- Social media and websites
- The city does not make the community aware of security concerns
- I don't know
- Other, please specify:.....

10. How does your community make transportation accessible to youth? (Check all that apply)

- Discounted fares on public transit for youth
- Buses/trains, etc are convenient for youth to use
- Transit schedules available through smart-phone applications
- There are designated bike lanes and bike routes in the city/community
- The transportation sector provides work/volunteer experiences for youth
- Other, please specify:.....

11. Are there special ways that your community recognizes and celebrate youth?

- Yes
  - If yes, in what ways:
    - Youth Week
    - Youth Newspaper
    - Scholarships
    - Awards
    - Other, please specify:.....
- No
- I don't know

12. What motivates or prevents youth from voting?

- Motivates (check all that apply):
- Youth care about the issues in their community
  - Youth were told to
  - Youth feel it is the right thing to do
  - Because youth have the ability to vote
  - Other, please specify:.....

- Prevents (check all that apply):
- Youth choose not to vote because they do not agree with any of the candidates running
  - Youth don't see the point in voting, they don't believe their vote will make a difference
  - Youth don't understand how the system works
  - Youth don't have an interest in voting, they believe that politics is for adults
  - Other, please specify:.....

13. Does your community give youth opportunities to take on leadership roles in the following (check all that apply):

- City Councils, Committees, Foundations, etc
- Non-profit Organizations
- Educational system (ie School Board, Peer mentors, etc)
- Community and Recreational Centres (ie Sport teams, etc)
- Library Committees
- Art Centres
- Cultural Groups
- Youth Associations

- Social Services
- Religious Communities
- Other, please specify:.....

14. What motivates or prevents youth in your community from participating and volunteering?

Motivates (check all that apply):

- School credit
- Scholarships
- They feel like they are making a difference
- Their friends encouraged them
- It is a way for youth to meet new and other like-minded youth
- They feel included, valued and respected
- Other, please specify:.....

Prevents (check all that apply):

- They have scheduling conflicts
- They do not have anyone else to go with
- They do not have a reliable way to get to and from the event safely
- They do not have the support of their family and friends
- The opportunities are irrelevant to youth
- Other, please specify:.....

15. Are there events in the community that are appropriate for youth and are easy to find?

- Yes

If yes, how are they advertised?

- Magazines
- Social media
- Newspapers
- YouThink newspaper
- Libraries/Community Spaces
- Websites
- Other, please specify:.....

- No

- I don't know

How much do you agree with these statements?

16. If it affects youth, youth should be involved/consulted.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17. Your community would benefit from lowering the voting age to 16.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18. Youth will learn about city governments better outside the classroom environment through field trips and hands-on learning.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19. Youth in your city are connected to their community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE Version 1 Feedback

## **GSWS 411/CMNS 487 Professor Catherine Murray**

- Consider new title for report card survey/questionnaire/youth city assessment, create a slogan that youth can relate to
- Provide a rationale behind each dimension, and where the questions come from, do they follow different questionnaire models like the Vancouver model or Femmes et Ville model
- Clearly define what age range is included in “youth”
- Personal questions: include how participant privacy will be kept
- Q 6. Focus on if there is enough youth spaces and what types of space youth need more of
- Q 7. How can the city do better?
- Q 8. Does your community have enough effective ways to hear youth?
- Q 9. Highlight safety and security
- Q 12. Divide into two separate questions, one asking what motivates youth to vote, and what are barriers to voting
- Q 12. Consider changing question to an agree/disagree model
- Q 14. Same design issue as Q 12.
- Q 16 – 19. Good series of questions, but would flow better by changing the

## **UVIC Child and Youth Life student**

- Consider including questions about First Nations programming, organizations, etc.
- Need to clearly define what “youth” is, who is included
- Q 6. Be aware of how some spaces are unaffordable to some youth and there can be shame associated with only being able to go and do free things
- Q 7. Better to ask how the city is delivering and embracing diversity and multiculturalism, if they even are. Give more context around diversity (include LGBT community and other minority/marginalized groups)
- Q 8. Too hard to ask if parents in general are listening to youth. Some parents care and encourage their children; some do not care at all about hearing the “youth voice”. Highlight that youth should be educated on the proper ways to bring issues to the city/approach adults
- Q 11. Youth run newspapers are hard to count on as they need to have large school/community support and mentorship to sustain them
- Q 12. Need to acknowledge that youth are lazy and also often have an apathetic approach to things, regardless of how important they may be
- Q 13. Include LGBT specific organizations
- Q 14. Friends motivate youth to get involved, but also parents, include parents as an option
- Youth events are also advertised in the news in general, on tv, in schools and largely by word of mouth

## **Youth Leader with the City of Port Moody**

- Key to define youth right away so the user is aware of all the factors the tester is considering

- Consider removing “I don’t know” categories, youth may be inclined to choose that to just get through survey instead of thinking about the questions
- Q 2. Male/Female/Transgender leaves out groups of people. If you are trying to be specific, make sure to get the proper terminology and consult experts
- Q 3. Should include an other option as some youth don’t fall into the current categories, like homeless youth and those in foster care, etc
- Q 4. Consider changing from FT/PT and seasonal to a scale of working between x number of hours per week/month
- Q 6. Confusing as community centre can be considered an umbrella term for youth centres and youth may not make that connection
- Q 7. Keep the comments section but also include a 1 – 10 scale rating
- Q 9. What is the meaning of “security concerns”? What is a security concern to youth?
- Q 11. Good question, it is very important to acknowledge the positive things that youth are doing in the community
- Q 12. Need to define “youth”. Doesn’t make sense to ask teenagers about voting as they are not old enough to participate
- Q 13 and 14. Good to give youth options that can help them fill out the survey by being able to recognize things they may not think of otherwise. Nice to include space for them to write in their own answers

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE Version 2

## Is Your City Youth Friendly? You Decide.

Ever wanted to grade your city on how accessible and open it is to you and your friends? Youth ages 15 - 25 make up an important part of any community so help us evaluate the level of “youth-friendliness” in your city. This research will help to advocate for greater youth engagement in municipalities across the country. So, you decide. Share your voice.

Information collected from this survey is solely for research purposes for **Young Women Civic Leaders**, a 2-year project initiated by the Justice Education Society of BC. We respect your privacy, and your contributions will remain anonymous.

This survey will take from 10-15 minutes to complete. If you have any questions in regards to this survey, please contact us at ([youthreportcard@gmail.com](mailto:youthreportcard@gmail.com)).

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (used for statistical purposes only):

1. What age range are you in?
  - 15-18
  - 19-25+
2. Which gender do you identify with?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Transgender
3. Who do you live with?
  - With parents/guardians
  - With roommates
  - With relatives
  - With spouse/partner
  - Alone
4. What is your work status?
  - Full-time
  - Part-time
  - Seasonally
  - I do not work
5. What city do you live in? .....
6. What level of education have you achieved or are currently pursuing?
  - High School
  - Post Secondary
  - Trades/Apprentice program
  - Other, please specify:.....

### YOUTH-FRIENDLINESS QUESTIONS

7. On a scale of 1 to 10, how adequate are the following youth spaces in your city?  
Skate parks  
Not Adequate   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Adequate

Sports facilities/fields  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

Arts facilities (music, theatre, dance, etc)  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

Community centres with youth programs  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

Aquatic centres  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

Libraries  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

Recreational Parks  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

After-school drop-in centres  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

Youth-employment centres  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

Other, please specify:.....  
 Not Adequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Adequate

8. On a scale of 1 to 10, how accessible are the previously listed spaces to youth in your city?  
 Not Accessible 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Accessible

9. What types of youth spaces should your city have more of?
- Skate parks
  - Sports facilities/fields
  - Arts facilities (music, theatre, dance, etc)
  - Community centres with youth programs
  - Aquatic Centres
  - Libraries
  - Recreational Parks
  - After-school drop-in centres
  - Youth-employment centres
  - Other, please specify:.....

10. Does your city embrace diversity and make everyone feel included through public events?  
 Yes  
 If yes, how does your city do this?  
 .....



- .....
- .....
- No
- If not, how can your city do better?
- .....
- .....
- .....

11. Where is the youth voice expressed in your city? (check all that apply)

- At city council meetings
- On social media
- In schools, student council, student clubs, etc
- At youth events
- On traditional media
- Other, please specify:.....

And who is listening? (check all that apply)

- High School Students
- University Students
- Parents/Guardians
- City Councillors, City Staff Representatives
- The Mayor
- Media and Press
- Teachers/School Counsellors
- Youth Oriented Organizations
- Other, please specify:.....

12. On a scale of 1 to 10, does your city have enough effective ways to hear youth?

Not Enough 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Enough

13. Are there special ways that your city recognizes and celebrate youth?

- Yes
- If yes, in what ways: (check all that apply)
- Youth Week
- Youth Newspaper
- Scholarships
- Awards
- Other, please specify:.....

- No
- If not, how could your city recognize and celebrate youth?
- .....

14. On a scale of 1-10, does your city give youth enough opportunities to take on leadership roles?

Not Enough 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Enough

15. What motivates youth in your city to participate and volunteer?

- School credit
- Scholarships
- They feel like they are making a difference
- Their friends and family encourage them
- It is a way for youth to meet new and other like-minded youth
- They feel included, valued and respected
- Other, please specify:.....

16. What prevents youth in your city from participating and volunteering?

- They have scheduling conflicts
- They do not have anyone else to go with
- They do not have a reliable way to get to and from the event safely
- They do not have the support of their family and friends
- The opportunities are irrelevant to youth
- Other, please specify:.....

17. Are there events in your city that are appropriate for youth and that are easy to find?

- Yes  
If yes, how are they advertised?
  - Magazines
  - Social media
  - Newspapers
  - School
  - Word of Mouth
  - YouThink newspaper
  - Libraries/Community Spaces
  - Websites
  - Other, please specify:.....
- No  
If not, how could they be advertised better?  
.....

18. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you agree with these statements?

- a. Youth in my city are connected to the community.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree
- b. It is more effective for youth to learn about city government outside of the classroom environment, through field trips and hands-on learning.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree
- c. My city should consult youth if an issue involves them.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

d. My city would benefit from lowering the voting age to 16.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

19. What motivates youth to vote? (check all that apply)

- Youth care about the issues in their community
- Youth were told to
- Youth feel it is the right thing to do
- Because youth have the ability to vote
- Other, please specify:.....

20. What prevents youth from voting? (check all that apply)

- Youth choose not to vote because they do not agree with any of the candidates running
- Youth don't see the point in voting, they don't believe their vote will make a difference
- Youth don't understand how the system works
- Youth don't have an interest in voting, they believe that politics is for adults
- Other, please specify:.....

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE Version 2 Feedback

## GSWS 411/CMNS 487 Professor Catherine Murray

- Q4. Change to options of how many hours they work, not a specific status
- Q9. Add in a question of how satisfied
- Q11. Awkward wording
- Q18. Reword: my city **would** consult youth in an issue involves them.
- Q20. Ask this question sooner. End on a more positive note.
- What's the big idea (what is the point of the questionnaire):
  - Aspirational?
  - Why have pride in your city?
  - Youth empowerment?
  - Probability of being a community leader

## GSWS 411/CMNS 487 Classmates

- Demographic Information – leave these easy to answer questions to the end
- Q2. Include an other or gender neutral category
- Q7. Having a 1-10 scale is too many intervals. 1-5 or 1-7 would be better. Have an odd number, so people can answer in the middle.
- Q8. Loaded question. Question needs to be more specific as to what space it is referring to
- Q10. Question can be answered both yes and no and respondents could add comments to both areas. There should be concrete examples for respondents to refer to
- Q11. Make this personal reword: Where do **you** express your voice and opinions in your city. Have a follow-up question: who listens to your voice when you express your opinions
- Q15. Add that respondents should check all that apply
- Q16. Needs to be on one page, too confusing if the possible answers continue on the next page
- Q17. Provide specific options and an other category

# Appendix D

## Letter to Survey Participants and Youth Organizations

### Letter Template:

Date

Dear \_\_\_\_,

We are students of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver BC, developing an academic report which analyses youth engagement practices and civic participation across cities in Canada. In partnership with the Justice Education Society of BC and their two-year project, 'Young Women Civic Leaders', we wish to establish an understanding of where Canadian youth civic engagement stands by the end of March 2014.

We recognize that you are/\_ is someone/an organization who/which supports youth empowerment through your programs and services, and would like to invite you to participate in our survey, which aims to recognize what people of different backgrounds, and age ranges feel about youth activities in their respective cities. With your support, we will recognize what the realities of youth engagement are, and this will help us understand what courses of action we need to take to help improve youth engagement practices.

Attached below is our Youth Report Card that should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. If possible, we would also appreciate if you could share this with your colleagues or youth you work with so we have a greater reach. Your responses will be kept confidential and only be used for the purpose of this report.

Should you have any questions in regards to this project, we would be happy to address. Our contact information is included below.

Best Regards,

### Example Letter:

Dear London Youth Advisory Council:

I am a Communications student at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver BC, and along with my classmates have been developing an academic report which analyses youth engagement practices and civic participation across cities in Canada. In partnership with the Justice Education Society of BC and their two-year project, 'Young Women Civic Leaders', we wish to establish an understanding of where Canadian youth civic engagement stands by early April 2014.

Through our research we have found that the City of London is one of the leaders in youth civic engagement through initiatives such as the London Youth Advisory Council and we would like to invite you to participate in our survey which aims to recognize what people of different backgrounds and age ranges feel about youth activities in their respective cities. With your support, we will recognize what the realities of youth engagement are, and this will help us understand what courses of action we need to take to help improve youth engagement practices.

Below is the link to our Youth Report Card that should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. If possible, we would also appreciate if you could share this with the youth on your council so we have a greater reach. Your responses will be kept confidential and only be used for the purpose of this report.

<http://goo.gl/wvFkJH>

Should you have any questions in regards to this project, we would be happy to address. Our contact information is included below.

Best Regards,

Susanne Milner  
Post-Baccalaureate Diploma, Communications  
Simon Fraser University

## Appendix E

### Beta Test Feedback

Highlights from the responses we received from our Assessment Toolkit included youth stating that their city would be more “youth friendly” if cities:

- Had more events for youth
- Increased awareness and advertisement of current city youth events and facilities
- Had a website (linked to the official city website for easy access) section that is geared towards youth
- Had more publicity and guidance for youth
- Had better transportation for youth to increase accessibility in their city
- Made more of an effort to reach out to youth on how to get involved or with opportunities for meet other youth and people in the community
- Had more inclusive spaces where youth can meet and interact in positive ways
- Catered to Francophone youth in the exact same ways it does to Anglophones
- Initiated a culture-shift geared around the interests of youth that go way beyond social media
- Had more opportunities to allow youth to be involved directly in more City initiatives and municipal politics
- Had more discussions about controversial issues that concern youth such as the stigma of social housing, homelessness and youth employment
- Had more programs and services for youth job employment opportunities

We also received feedback from a member of the London Youth Advisory Council. Please see Exhibit 1 for his statement.

#### **Exhibit 1. Feedback from Beta Test Assessment: London Youth Advisory Council**

*“I think that what you're trying to do with the assessment tool is great. It's hard to determine how granular these things should be and how complicated they should be so I don't envy you for having to figure out the survey design.*

*On first glance, here are just a few thoughts that I had:*

- *I really like the fact that the survey doesn't use 'City' with a capital 'C' -- Youth are unlikely to know who provides the 'youth' services in a city (Municipal Government, Not-for-Profits, School Boards, etc.) so I think that it's much more effective to do what you're doing and try to measure whether a city as a whole has enough youth supports.*
- *It makes the survey more complicated, but I feel like some answers would benefit from a Likert scale, but that obviously makes the survey more complicated to analyze and for the respondent to fill out*

*- Again, this makes the survey more complicated, but I wonder if it's fair to weight all of the factors equally. Some of the indicators seem less important to me (ie. youth-focused website, social media outreach, youth days, etc.) than others (that's just an opinion of course) so I wondered about weighting certain indicators more or less heavily when calculating the report card score.*

*It looks like you're doing great work and I'm planning on reading through the material on the Young Women Civic Leaders project so that I have a better sense of the full slate of things that you're working on."*

*- Adam Fearnall, Governance and Policy Consultant of the London Youth Advisory Council*

**For future reference, here are the important questionnaire web links from the toolkit:**

Assessment Questions: <http://goo.gl/wvFkJH>

Beta Test Responses: <http://goo.gl/vIjlZ>



# Appendix F

## Contact Information of Individuals We Contacted

Jessica Danyk  
*Surrey Youth Street Squad*  
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Councillor Kerri Palmer Isaak  
Village of Anmore

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Specialist, Strategic Programs and Projects  
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Ottawa Youth Commission  
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Mississauga Youth Advisory Council - Contact form:<http://myac-mississauga.com/contact/>

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