

AGAINST THE CURRENT KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE 2026

RAISE
OR RAZE



How do our
systems shape
youth futures?

The Students Commission
of Canada, engaging youth
for 35 years

Against the Current Knowledge Exchange Program

Toronto Reference Library
May 13, 2026



The Students
Commission
of Canada
*Centre of Excellence for
Youth Engagement*



La commission
des élèves du
Canada
*Le centre d'excellence pour
l'engagement des jeunes*

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Registration & Welcome Breakfast 7:30AM to 8:30AM

Opening Remarks & Session 1 8:30AM to 10:30AM
Intergenerational Partnerships, The Heart of the Village

Session 2 10:45AM to 11:45AM
System Change, Avoiding the Drift



Lunch 12:00PM to 1:00PM

Session 3 1:00PM to 2:00PM
Hearing Unheard Moments, Shifting Cultures

Session 4 2:10PM to 3:10PM
Celebrating Culture, The Roots of the Village

Session 5 3:20PM to 4:20PM
Spaces that Shape the Village, Families, Schools, Schools, Recreation and Business

Closing Summary 4:30PM to 5:00PM

PROGRAM FLOW

**Against the Current invites participants to explore the question:
Raise or Raze - How do our systems shape youth futures?**

Are we co-creating environments that empower young people to thrive, while critically examining the barriers that still hold them back? This year, Against the Current will mark a milestone: the Students Commission of Canada's 35th anniversary as a youth voice node within Canada's youth-serving network.

Youth-serving collaboration is, in part, about co-creating environments that build youth confidence and competence through structured support. For the day, we create a village environment. Expert speakers kick off each session block for the whole village; then participants move into various neighborhoods to explore together the session theme in smaller groups through facilitated conversations and diverse styles of interactive techniques.

How will the day flow?

Session blocks begin with a *Kick Start Presentation* at the front of the room. Led by a team of youth leaders, adult allies from the non-profit sector, and academic partners from the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, these presentations combine evidence, lived experience, and critical questions.

After a short transition, participants head into their chosen *Neighbourhood* breakouts, where they'll engage in a small group activity or conversation that build upon session themes. Neighbourhood breakouts are opportunities for all participants to shape the conversation and the current of the day. These sessions are co-led by youth and adult facilitators and offer different ways of engaging with the session's central question. Taken together, neighbourhoods comprise an *intergenerational village* of connection and action each of us can bring into communities and systems beyond Against the Current.

Each session block includes time to recharge between sessions—grab a coffee, keep a conversation going, or pause for reflection.

Neighbourhoods to Explore

Each Neighbourhood offers a distinct way to experience and explore youth leadership:



1. **Artistic Neighbourhood:** Uses creative methods (art, storytelling, performance) to examine key questions and build shared understanding.



2. **Kinesthetic Neighbourhood:** Uses physical movement and activity to explore complex or controversial leadership topics in an embodied way.



3. **Dive Deeper into Kick Start Neighbourhood:** Extends the kick start conversation with interactive discussions and activities led by the presenters.



4. **Village Exchange Neighbourhood:** Highlights facilitated critical conversations and resource sharing on topics related to the session theme.



5. **Program Design Neighbourhood:** Focuses on unpacking the building blocks of youth leadership, engagement programming, and system change, strategic approaches with hands-on tools and discussions.



6. **Studio Neighbourhood:** Offers participants a chance to help document the day—record interviews, create content, and contribute to collective knowledge mobilization.



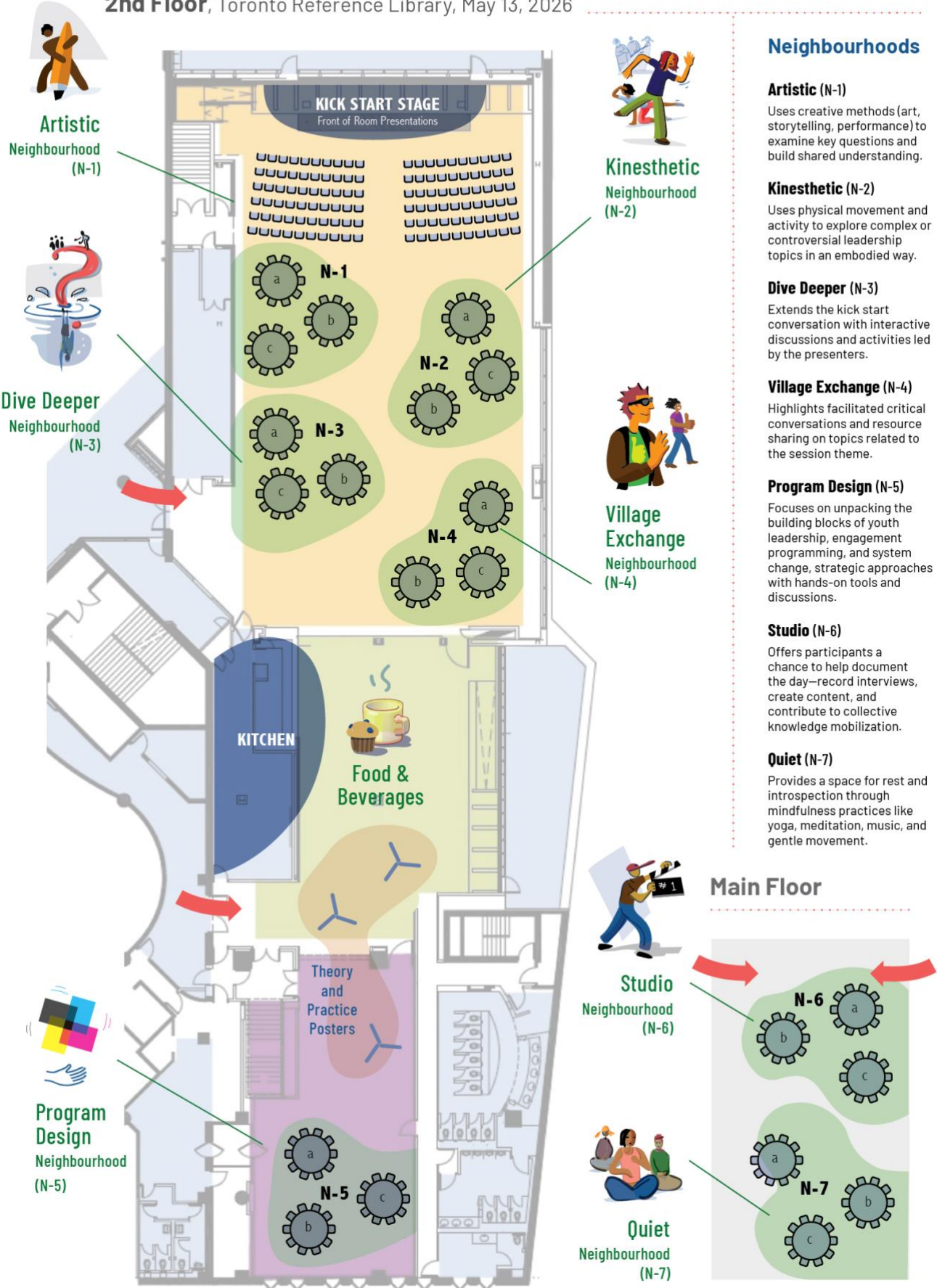
7. **Quiet Neighbourhood:** Provides a space for rest and introspection through mindfulness practices like yoga, meditation, music, and gentle movement.

In Theory & Practice Poster Zone, participants, academics, and community partners showcase models and research related to youth thriving and engagement. It's a great place to gather inspiration and take away tangible ideas.

INTERGENERATIONAL VILLAGE

Exploring evidence, environments and techniques

2nd Floor, Toronto Reference Library, May 13, 2026



Neighbourhoods

Artistic (N-1)

Uses creative methods (art, storytelling, performance) to examine key questions and build shared understanding.

Kinesthetic (N-2)

Uses physical movement and activity to explore complex or controversial leadership topics in an embodied way.

Dive Deeper (N-3)

Extends the kick start conversation with interactive discussions and activities led by the presenters.

Village Exchange (N-4)

Highlights facilitated critical conversations and resource sharing on topics related to the session theme.

Program Design (N-5)

Focuses on unpacking the building blocks of youth leadership, engagement programming, and system change, strategic approaches with hands-on tools and discussions.

Studio (N-6)

Offers participants a chance to help document the day—record interviews, create content, and contribute to collective knowledge mobilization.

Quiet (N-7)

Provides a space for rest and introspection through mindfulness practices like yoga, meditation, music, and gentle movement.

Main Floor

Studio
Neighbourhood
(N-6)

Quiet
Neighbourhood
(N-7)

SESSION DETAILS

Intergenerational Partnerships, The Heart of the Village

35 years of shifting the culture of youth engagement, coast-to-coast-to-coast and globally

Linda Rose-Krasnor, PhD. Professor Emeritus, Brock University, Founding Academic Director of the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

Denise Campbell, Deputy City Manager, City of Toronto

David Forteau, Creative Director, Producer

Brina Ludwig-Prout, Board Chair, The Students Commission of Canada

Niko Lacroix, President of Students Against Drunk Driving, Student Representative Council Officer (Saskatchewan)

Abbi Poirier, Regional Youth Lead, Generation XX (Prince Edward Island)

System Change, Avoiding the Drift

Collaborative structures and partnerships needed for communities to move upstream, toward system changes that create environments where youth can thrive

Tanya Halsall, PhD, Scientist, University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research at The Royal, Assistant Professor, School of Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Ottawa

Chad Bredin, Policy Analyst, Public Health Agency of Canada

Stephanie Wright, Manager of Youth Programs and Partnerships, NextGen Men

Talib Michael Hirlehey, Regional Youth Leader, YACHS Highland Shores (Ontario)

Hearing Unheard Moments, Shifting Cultures

Difficult conversations and alignment of efforts needed to reach cultural tipping points, locally and nationally, towards safety and inclusion

Heather Lawford, PhD, Professor, Bishop's University, SSHRC TII Canada Research Chair, Youth Development, 3M National Teaching Fellow

Becca Henry, Senior Policy Advisor, Public Safety Canada

Shannon Nash, PhD, Senior Policy Advisor, Public Safety Canada

Roger Romero, Manager of Youth Services, Kingston Community Health Centres

Madin Hoey, Prince Albert Youth Group, Aspiring Educator (Saskatchewan)

Jiya Charla, Program Facilitator, Red Fox Healthy Living Society (British Columbia)

Celebrating Culture: The Roots of the Village

How prioritizing the needs, dreams, and interests of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth reshapes what intergenerational partnerships in a healthy village look like for (non)Indigenous youth.

Jennifer Markides, PhD, SSHRC TII Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Youth Wellbeing and Education Associate Professor, Curriculum and Learning, Werklund School of Education & Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary

Zoey Roy, PhD, Researcher, Spoken Word Artist, Community-based Educator

Baamiishi Ikwe (Flying Woman), Antonia (Toni) McCune, Elder

Erica Van Vugt, Archeologist, Indigenous Research Circle & the Pawaatamihk Journal of Metis Thinkers

Heaven Ryder, Youth Leader and Facilitator, SCC Roster Cohort 2 (Saskatchewan)

Spaces that Shape the Village: Families, Schools, Recreation, and Businesses

Exploring how core community environments can partner to support youth flourishing

Lori Brooks, Director-General, Employment Skills Development Canada

Tracy Luca-Huger, Executive Director, Mentor Canada

Andrea Haefele & Maleah Omari, Ophea

Yana Berardini, PhD, Assistant Professor, Child and Youth Studies, Trent University and member of the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence

Steven Whitaker, OCT, MES, SWAN (Sports, Wellness and Achievement Network)

Youssof Khalil, Youth Worker and Leader, Red Fox Healthy Living Society (British Columbia)

Wrap-up: Raise or Raze & Closing Remarks

What today means for raising youth up for a brighter tomorrow and razing the systemic barriers in their way -- Reflections and Directions.

Heather Ramey, CYW, PhD, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Sharif Mahdy, Chief Executive Officer, The Students Commission of Canada, in conversation with key speakers of the day

Serin Ali, Youth Leader and SCC Youth Roster member (New Brunswick)

Smruti Patel, Be Blunt Youth Researcher, Peer Influencer, and Tutor (Ontario)

Eva Chaurasia, Be Blunt Youth Researcher and School Board Student Trustee (Ontario)

BIOGRAPHIES

Opening Remarks

Florence Bergeron, incoming Chief Executive Officer, The Students Commission of Canada

Florence has led teams and major projects in all areas of SCC's operations, ranging from policy, strategy, revenue generation and research consultation for all levels of government across Canada, leading SCC's research and knowledge mobilization team, its platform development, and executing major events such as Take Our Kids to Work, the #CanadaWeWant Conference series, and securing major opportunities to foster youth engagement with the likes of the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Joint Consortium on School Health, and most recently the Aga Khan Foundation Canada. Her work sits at the intersection of operations, knowledge mobilization, and youth voice. She leads by helping ensure that what youth share through consultations, conferences, and national projects is not only heard, but reflected in organizational decision making and communicated to those positioned to drive systemic change.

Session 1

Kickstarters

Abbi Poirier is 19-year-old Regional Youth Lead, Youth Vice-President for Generation XX in Prince Edward Island. Involved with The Students Commission for 4 years, she is now a member of its Influencer Roster. Her focus at Generation XX, a local youth club, is to help youth through all types of difficulties and help her community. She says, "Growing up with a different family dynamic gave me a sense of leadership since day one. I take pride in helping others and being a leader in my community."

Linda Rose-Krasnor is a Professor Emeritus in the Brock University Psychology Department. She was one of the founding academics of the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement and has been working with the Students Commission and the Centre since 2001. Her research has focused on social development and engagement in children and youth, with a special interest in shyness and social anxiety. Linda helped craft and publish the Centre's definition of youth engagement in the early 1990s, which is cited internationally and nationally and widely adopted in government and organizational policies and practices across Canada.

Denise Campbell, Deputy City Manager, City of Toronto, is a purpose-driven executive leader with a successful history of delivering transformational change on social justice

issues. Denise attended a Students Commission Conference in 1992, began volunteering for The Students Commission as a teenager, then worked for it as a young adult, helping establish the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement. She's famous as a teenager in SCC's archives for a video clip of her saying, "we are learning to be obnoxious, but in a good way." She challenged the word participation in the Centre's name and suggested the word engagement instead. She has played a major role in developing system change policies, programs and practice in her career at the City including providing strategic policy and financial leadership to the management of approximately \$2 billion in financial subsidy programs from the federal and provincial governments leading transformative change initiatives like the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, SafeTO, and developing the Toronto Community Crisis Service. Denise is also the recipient of the 2023 Lieutenant Governor's Medal of Distinction in Public Administration, Ontario's highest honour for public service.

David Forteau, Creative Director, Producer, TinyLoft Studios is an influencer in the worlds of dance, fashion, music videos, and short films for fashion brands. He has a passion for motivational and public speaking and has worked in that field with charities, including the Students Commission, giving workshops for Project Peace, and helping youth with issues such as gun violence and violence against women. David would give Master Class workshops to youth on what was and was not "snitching" that helped course correct the lives of many youth. His Toronto-based creative agency has been dedicated to elevating content for artists and brands, tailoring itineraries that spotlight their unique narratives. He focuses on producing top-tier content that resonates with fans and supporters, ensuring each project reflects the highest standards of creativity and engagement. Concurrently, as an influencer in brand partnerships for over eight years, he has specialized in B2B marketing, helping to forge authentic connections between brands and their target audiences. His mission remains steadfast: to advance the culture and inspire the community, never losing sight of the impact we can make together.

Niko Lacroix is President of Students Against Drunk Driving, Student Representative Council Officer (Saskatchewan) and a member of The Student Commission of Canada's (SCC) Youth Roster. As a Métis/Nehiyawan high school student from Saskatoon he is deeply proud of his heritage and actively practices his culture. Passionate about advocacy, dialogue, and connecting with people from diverse backgrounds, has extensive leadership and teaching experience across schools, cadets, and community initiatives. He services on his school's Student Representative Council, the Living in Harmony/Truth and Reconciliation Club, is a member of the UNICEF Youth Advocacy Program and has served as a panelist at the Cooperative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL) conference, as well active on many SCC projects, including Hearing Unheard Moments, which is looking to shift cultures related to grievance-based violence and polarization.

Brina Ludwig Prout has been the proud Chair of the Student's Commission of Canada for 8 years and is passionate about inter-generational collaboration as an effective mechanism

for social change, inclusion and ensures that mentoring is a key component of any undertaking she involves herself in. Brina is a Certified Human Resources Leader and a change, project and program management expert. Brina has consulted to senior levels in corporate Canada, emerging entrepreneurs, and social enterprise organizations. She is also a board member of the Child Development Institute a charity focused on children's mental health. For 10 years, Brina has also been a caregiver promoting the importance of Caregiver inclusion on patient outcomes. Brina recently spoke at the World Stroke Congress on the importance of caregivers. She is the co-chair of the Advisory Committee for Ontario Caregiver's Organization's Essential Care Partners support Hub and recently was awarded the Janet Beed Impact Award. This award celebrates a caregiver who embodies values around raising awareness of the needs of caregivers and generating solutions to address those needs. This individual also calls for action, works to create impact, and collaborates with others to be a champion for caregivers.

Session 2

Kickstarters

Tanya Halsall, PhD, is a Scientist at the University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research at the Royal, Assistant Professor at the School of Epidemiology and Public Health at the University of Ottawa and an Adjunct Research Professor in the Department of Neuroscience at Carleton University. She is also the lead for the YOUTH lab (Youth-focused Upstream Transformation for Health). Her primary research areas are related to child and youth development, evaluation and health promotion. Her specific interests are in participatory approaches and interventions that support system change for child and youth well-being. Current research projects and interests with The Students Commission of Canada include using the lens of the Commercial Determinants of Health framework to examine individual, social and systemic on-line harms generated by current business practices in the tech industry.

Chad Bredin is a policy analyst in the Centre for Mental Health & Wellbeing at the Public Health Agency of Canada. He has worked in the field of youth health research and promotion for over 20 years with the Government of Canada and at the University of Waterloo.

Stephanie Wright is Manager of Youth Programs & Partnerships, Next Gen Men and leads NGM Alliance, a Discord community for boys and nonbinary youth, and ROPE, summer canoe and hiking expeditions in the Canadian backcountry. With a passion for rethinking youth engagement in the digital age, she helps young people form deeper connections with themselves and real friendships with each other — online and in person.

Talib Michael Hirlehey, is Regional Youth Leader, YACHS Highland Shores (Ontario) and a youth leader who is passionate about youth advocacy. He has participated in the Canada We Want 2026 conference, making recommendations on culture and healthy relationships.

He currently sits in a Youth Advisory Committee about giving youth a seat at the table, and making their voices heard so they can make change. Talib's goal is to improve the lives of all marginalized youth.

Session 3

Kickstarters

Heather Lawford, PhD is a Professor at Bishop's University, a SSHRC TII Canada Research Chair, Youth Development, and 3M National Teaching Fellow. Her research examines the ways in which youth are able to reach their full potential and make meaningful contributions to their community. She is also interested in a narrative life-story approach to psychology. She seeks to understand how the stories we tell about ourselves shape who we are and who we become. Dr. Lawford leads the research and evaluation for SCC's Hearing Unheard Moments Project and the collaboration with 10 national partners, implementing in multiple communities across Canada.

Jiya Charla, is a Program Facilitator, for Red Fox Healthy Living Society (British Columbia). Jiya is a passionate and hardworking student studying psychology with a law and society minor at the University of British Columbia. She is also a program coordinator at Red Fox Healthy Living Society driven by the motivation to help youth stay active, overcome barriers and learn valuable skills. With her goals to work in the legal field some day, her experience working with youth for five years at both Red Fox and other community service work brings her closer to achieve the skills and accomplish her goals.

Neighbourhood Leads

Cultural Shifts for Carers and Unheard Population

Rebekah Gold is a PhD candidate in Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. Her research is grounded in critical, participatory, and arts-based collaboration with young carers and their families, informed by her own lived wisdom as a young carer and advocate. Her community-based research work is at the intersection of critical mental health, Mad studies, critical disability studies, critical childhood studies, storytelling, and care work. She is the Co-founder and National Council Lead of the Young Caregiver Council of Canada, a grassroots advocacy community of young carers across Canada, and a Research Affiliate with the Young Caregivers Association.

Session 4

Kickstarters

Jennifer Markides, PhD, is a citizen of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government (formerly Métis Nation of Alberta), SSHRC Tier II Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Youth Well-Being

and Education, and Associate Professor in both the Werklund School of Education and Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. Her community-based research focuses on the dreams, interests, needs, and holistic wellbeing of Indigenous youth.

Baamiishi Ikwe (Flying Woman) Antonia (Toni) McCune was born in Treaty Four Territory at the town of Kamsack, near Fort Pelly Agency. She lived on the Keeseekoose Indian Reserve as a child, attending the same Residential School as her grandparents, parents and older siblings. Later she would attend Mount Royal College and University of Calgary. Her work took her on a journey with several social service organizations until she landed in the Government of Alberta. It was there that her skills and life experience bought her the most satisfaction, working with at risk families and a sought-after trainer for the province in Children's Services. Now a traditional ceremony holder, she uses cultural methods of healing through ceremony to generations of Residential and Day School survivors and helps younger generations understand the trauma left to them in the wake of historical wrongs. She is retired but continues to work as a speaker/Elder for various institutions, including the Calgary John Howard Society, Indigenous Wellbriety Group, Ikwew Scapaew (Women Helpers), Mental Health Research 4 Kids, and Alberta Indigenous Relations for the Government of Alberta.

Erica Van Vugt, Archeologist, Indigenous Research Circle & the Pawaatamihk Journal of Metis Thinkers, is a member of the Otipemisiwak Nation of Alberta, and a graduate student at the University of Calgary. Her work focuses on community archaeology, digital heritage, and data sovereignty. She also works as part of the Indigenous Research Circle, the Pawaatamihk Journal of Metis Thinkers, and other community-based initiatives.

Heaven Ryder is Youth Leader and Facilitator, in Saskatchewan and a member of the Student Commission of Canada Youth Roster after her first experience with the CanadaWeWant Conference. While working on the roster, she's been able to participate in other conferences and events where she facilitates with other youth and individuals. In the past, she's volunteered at youth centres and mental health camps for children, which progressed to interacting with and sometimes supporting other troubled youth in through the Pathways Program. For her future, she'll set course towards becoming a psychologist who specializes in working with youth and adolescents.

Session 5

Kickstarters

Lori Brooks is Director-General, Employment Skills Development Canada. As a senior manager in the federal government for over 20 years, Lori oversees employment policies for youth and students. Her background includes working with young people in corrections and shelters, focusing on keeping them connected to their communities to reduce social exclusion. Lori believes that youth should feel connected to their communities and have the

space to make their own decisions while developing meaningful relationships in inspiring environments. Lori emphasizes the need to create welcoming environments for all youth to gather and connect. In addition to her work and volunteer experiences, she draws on examples that she has seen through her own adolescence in Montreal in the 90s and what her 14-year-old twins in Ottawa are teaching her about how and where youth today make spaces to gather and connect beyond school... or don't, leading to concerns about their social well-being and overall development.

Steven Whitaker, *Walking Alongside You(th)*, University of Calgary has spent the past 30 years as an educator, as a teacher and physical education specialist in Toronto, and as a teacher and school administrator in Whitefish River First Nation, Ontario. Retired from teaching in 2024, he now works with the University of Calgary's 'Walking Alongside You(th)' project, which seeks to improve educational experiences and outcomes for Indigenous and all youth by hearing from the youth themselves about their educational needs and aspirations. Based on the findings of this research, Steve is currently working to develop a template for year-round enhanced sport and wellness opportunities for rural and remote schools in northern Alberta.

Yana Berardini, PhD, is a Child and Youth Studies Assistant Professor at Trent University. Her research program examines the mental health and wellness of equity-seeking children and youth, and among them young caregivers. Yana's research explores young caregivers' experiences in relation to mental health, program outcomes, and policy development. She collaborates with the Students Commission of Canada and multiple young caregiving organizations, namely the Young Caregiver Council of Canada (YCCC), Young Caregivers Association (YCA), Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO), and the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence (CCCE), to better understand how to identify and support young caregivers in Canada. She is discovering that, when asked, a surprising number of young people identify their caregiving responsibilities.

Maleah Omari is a Project Coordinator with Ophea. She holds a background in Kinesiology and Health Promotion, bringing experience from working in community settings. She is committed to creating safe and engaging environments that encourage participation in physical activity. Currently, she is working on the Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga project, where community partners come together to improve access to nourishing food and physical activity opportunities to support school-aged children feeling valued and included through building healthy, active lifestyles and enhancing their overall well-being.

Andrea Haefel is a teacher in the York Region District School board in Ontario, currently seconded as a Health & Physical Education curriculum consultant at Ophea. She has been part of many regional and provincial initiatives that support the H&PE curriculum, Healthy Schools, and also the Daily Physical Activity provincial policy. She is a strong advocate for people with disabilities and has spoken at professional learning networks such as the

Hospital for SickKids, the Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Jumpstart Charities, and Autism Ontario.

Tracy Luca-Huger is Executive Director at Mentor Canada. Tracy's vision, leadership and strategic acumen are a powerful force in establishing a strong mentoring field in Canada. Tracy is profoundly well-suited to her position. Leveraging her extensive consulting experience, as well as past senior roles at leading charities, she is galvanizing a vast network of change-makers—across sectors and regions, private industry and public institutions—to deliver on the promise of assured access to mentors for any young person, anywhere in Canada. An ongoing contributor to Alberta Mentoring Partnership and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, Tracy is adept at focusing her team on developing innovative mentoring programs, tools, partnerships and collaborations. She holds an M.A. in Counselling Psychology from Gonzaga University and is a Certified Canadian Counsellor. A talented cook and food-lover, Tracy enjoys travelling the world.

Youssof Khalil Born in Egypt, Youssof moved to the United States with his family at the age of three. Growing up across seven different schools exposed him to a variety of cultures and environments that shaped his perspective. He developed an early passion for science and debate. His professional experience includes youth care, warehousing, and security. In his free time, he enjoys swimming, fishing, and playing soccer.

Neighbourhood Leads

Voices of the Village: Visual Representation

Finnce Lynn May Millar Dagleish is from Pathways to Education in Kingston, Ontario: "Hiya! My name is Finnce, like 'finance' without the "a", and I go by he/they. I've always been drawn to the arts—no pun intended. While I work in visual art, music has always been where I've felt the most heard. That feeling is what inspired this activity. So many people want to be heard but aren't, or they're misunderstood. I wanted to create a space where people can explore that—to express how they want to be heard, and reflect on how they feel they're actually perceived."

Community and School Opportunities

Cayleigh Sexton is the Executive Director of the Young Caregivers Association, where she has spent over a decade learning from and working alongside young caregivers. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Child and Youth Studies and a Bachelor of Education from Brock University, as well as a Master of Arts in Child and Youth Studies. Her graduate research focused on young caregivers, understanding their experiences through a stress and coping framework. Cayleigh brings extensive frontline experience working directly with young caregivers and has played a key role in designing and co-creating innovative, developmentally responsive programs that support young caregivers across the lifespan. Her work is grounded in both research and practice, with a strong commitment to

advancing awareness, support, and evidence-informed approaches within the field of young caregiving.

Creating Awareness of Carers Across their Spaces and Responsibilities

Josie Del Rosso is a fourth year Child and Youth Studies student at Trent University in Durham, Ontario. Her research interests lie in children's rights, civic engagement, youth voice, and, most recently, young carers. Supervised by Dr. Yana Berardini, her undergraduate thesis explores Canadian young carers' needs, challenges, and ideas for support. In the fall, she will be attending Brock University's Master of Child and Youth Studies program. Under the supervision of Dr. Berardini and Dr. Heather Ramey, she hopes to explore the relationship between youth political participation, civic engagement, and social media use. When she is not researching, you can find her performing on stage or curled up with a good book.

Emily Wright is a third year Honours BA student in the Department of Child and Youth Studies (CHYS) at Trent University in Durham, Ontario. Emily has a background in clinical practicums, community research, and educational support. Emily is passionate about learning how to better support child and youths' mental health and wellbeing and plans to expand her research into supporting young caregivers in Canada.

Closing Section

Eva Chaurasia is a Grade 11 student, a Simcoe County District School Board Student Trustee (Ontario), and a Youth Researcher with The Students Commission's Be Blunt cannabis youth project. She is passionate about creating meaningful change through leadership. Outside the classroom, she tutors elementary students and stays involved in her community, using mentorship and service to make a lasting impact.

Smruti Patel is a Grade 11 student, peer influencer and a youth researcher who focuses on the challenges young people face today with cannabis. Through the Student Commission's BeBlunt project, she researches youth cannabis use and works with other youth to better understand peer influence and harm reduction. She tutosr elementary students, where she enjoys mentoring younger learners and helping them feel more confident in school. She is passionate about youth voice, learning through research, and contributing to work that can make a real impact in communities.

Serin Ali is a Youth Leader and a senior at Saint John High School in New Brunswick with a clear vision for her future. As a Kurdish immigrant, she is determined and values new opportunities. She plans to attend Mount Allison University for a Bachelor of Arts in Biology while training at Moncton Flight College to earn her pilot's license. She was part of the Students Commission's Canada We Want Conference and later became part of its Youth Roster. She hopes to become a pilot captain.

Posters

Supporting the Unsupported: What Canadian Young Carers Say They Need

Josie Del Rosso | Department of Child and Youth

Bridging The Gap with Mobile Youth Services (MYS): Enhancing Mental Health Access in Rural Communities

Emily Wright | Department of Child and Youth

Cognitive Engagement Across Academic and Extracurricular Activities

Erika Savage & Dr. Heather Ramey - Dept. of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University, Students Commission of Canada

Youth Leaders

Abed Al Moeti resides in St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. He is currently studying Business Administration in college and is working as a barber with a dream of owning his own business soon. Abed actively contributed to making recommendations to key actors and decision makers on culture and relationships at the past #CanadaWeWant conference.

Madin Hoey is a motivated individual from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, who currently works at Creeland Mini Mart 2. Known for being social, talkative, and supportive, he brings positive energy to every environment he's part of. He is a member of the Students Commission's Youth Roster, where he continues to grow and build connections. Madin is focused on building a strong portfolio as he works toward his goal of pursuing a secondary education in teaching and making a positive impact in the lives of others.