

The Students Commission of Canada Annual Report 2020



TOGETHER OR APART



SAFER SPACES

The Students
Commission
Centre of Excellence for
Youth Engagement



La commission
des étudiants
Le centre d'excellence pour
l'engagement des jeunes

"I listened, learned and shared."

- Youth participant

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The Students
Commission

*Centre of Excellence for
Youth Engagement*



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Message from Leadership

2020 in Review

2020 was a challenging year for young people and adults alike across the country and the world. Our team took a #BounceForward approach to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Overnight, we adapted our programming to the virtual space and accelerated the development of our Sharing the Stories online platform. In spite of the challenges, the resilience of our organization and networks have made this one of our strongest years ever.

We were very fortunate to be able to hold the annual #CanadaWeWant Conference in-person, mere days before the WHO declared the COVID-19 pandemic, and much of Canada went into a nationwide lockdown. The conference drew 300 young people and adult allies from every province and territory, working together to explore eight theme topics and present their vision for the #CanadaWeWant at the culminating in-person showcase event hosted by RBC's Future Launch Strategy team.

In the wake of the pandemic, we went on to host a number of virtual events including our #CanadaWeWant Knowledge Exchange, with the online format allowing us to expand our reach wider than ever engaging with over 300 academics, youth service providers, and young people. We onboarded a number of new projects and established our first ever #CanadaWeWant Facilitator Roster, a network of 50 young people from communities across the country involved directly in our project work and supporting the conference and online events. In some ways, the virtual world has brought us closer together than and strengthened our network in ways we could never have imagined pre-Pandemic.

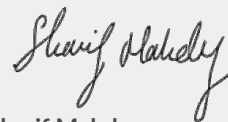
With the pandemic unearthing structural issues and inequities in our society, the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE) engaged in a study partnering with UNICEF on an international research project to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people. In a project funded by FRAYME to explore Virtual Innovations in Care, the CEYE conducted research on the impact of the pandemic on social programs and service delivery in rural/small urban communities in Canada. These initiatives will help us understand what has worked and what hasn't worked during the pandemic and inform decision-making around youth programming in a post-COVID world.

With our team and work growing in spades, we invested within the node to set us up to continue achieving our strategic priorities in the years to come. 2020 saw the establishment of a Cultures and Values team focused on maintaining a healthy culture for staff and volunteers. With this team in place, more attention was diverted to professional development opportunities and supports for staff to ensure our team has the skills needed to execute our social purpose. Through Nobody's Born A Racist 2.0, we began a 10-year journey to reaffirm and strengthen efforts to address structural racism in Canada, starting from within. We put in place a stronger governance framework for our Board of Directors, with our first ever HR and Audit & Risk Committees being established in early 2021 to move our strategic objectives forward.

Our 30th Anniversary is on the horizon and while this year was challenging, we are grateful that we found new and innovative ways to purposefully work with others to ensure that young people's voices are valued, heard and their ideas for improving themselves, the lives of their peers and communities are put into action.



Brina Ludwig Prout
National Chair



Sharif Mahdy
Executive Director

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the young people who joined us throughout 2020 from coast to coast to coast who continued to support us in achieving our desired outcome, a world where all young people transition positively into a successful adulthood.

We acknowledge the traditional territories of Indigenous communities across Kanata on which

we are situated, and we thank these communities for sharing this space and continuing to protect these lands. Thank you to our Elders Council for continuing to ground our work in Indigenous practices and intergenerational partnerships.

We are grateful for the contributions of our many partners and funders listed below:

Funders and Network Partners

ACSA
AIDS Committee of Durham
Asper Centre
Belleville Community Health
Centre
Bishop's University
Black Health Alliance
Canadian Native Friendship
Centre
Centre for Connected
Communities (C3)
Child Welfare League
City of Kingston
City of Toronto
East Scarborough Storefront
Experiences Canada (
Flemingdon Health Centre

FRAYME
Golden Community Foundation
Government of Canada
John Howard Society of
Belleville
Laidlaw Foundation
National Alliance of Children &
Youth (NACY)
Octevaw
Ontario Trillium Foundation –
Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF)
Grantees
Ophea
Pathways to Education Canada
People for Education
Planned Parenthood Toronto
Positive Space Network

PrevNet
RBC Future Launch
Saskatoon Community
Foundation
Saskatoon Tribal Council
Sistema Toronto
S.L.Y.E.
Taking IT Global- Rising Youth
Tamarack Institute
Teach for Canada
Three Things Consulting
Toronto Public Health
UNICEF Canada
United Way of Greater Toronto
Vinyasa Yoga for Youth
White Ribbon Canada
YMCA Canada

“[I learned] how different educational standards are across the country ... I feel shocked [by] the lack of unity in education across Canada.”

– Future of Public Education, youth participant



Statement of Purpose

Purpose

The SCC is a charitable organization that purposefully works with others to ensure that young people's voices are heard, valued and their ideas for improving themselves, the lives of their peers and communities are put into action.

Our desired outcome

A world where all young people transition positively into a successful adulthood.

Our Four Pillars: Respect, Listen, Understand, Communicate™

Respect: We start with respect for the gift and strength that each person carries within: for young people, their idealism and their capacity to improve the world.

Listen: With respect as our foundation, we learn to listen. We listen not just with our ears, but with our heads, hearts and all of our senses. We listen actively, intensely, not just to words, but to silences, to deeds, to experiences.

Understand: To understand is to go beyond listening, to process what we have heard from others, to reflect upon the new knowledge and gifts given to us.

Communicate: The beginning of action, this is when the obstacles fall away. We create plans with others and implement them to make a positive difference in our world.

Our Strategic Priorities at a Glance

Our focus is to stay small, incubate ideas directly with youth, and work in partnership in all projects with youth and other organizations. We focus on being a node in the web of Canadian organizations and institutions that promotes the exchange of knowledge and expertise among youth and organizations to promote all youth thriving in a healthy Canada.



Turn Knowledge into Action and Action into Knowledge

1. Capture knowledge and tell stories about what's working and not working for Canadian youth.
2. Increase and share the evidence-base on effective youth programming.
3. Young people generate and use evidence to take action on issues that matter to them.



Strengthen the Youth Well-Being Network

1. Champion youth-led initiatives; provide and advance youth opportunities to network with each other.
2. Work with others; shape a positive future for all young Canadians.
3. Build capacity, connections and understanding among youth and organizations.



Strengthen our function as a Node in the Youth Well-Being Network

1. Continue to reflect upon, refine and execute our specific skill sets to contribute to the network purpose.
2. Continue to strengthen and diversify our funding sources to sustain our activities over longer periods of time without financial pressures.
3. Continue to hire young people and support our staff, volunteers with professional development.

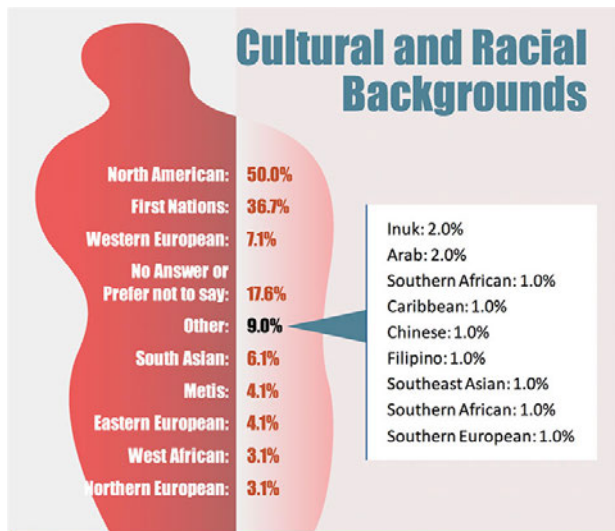


Original comic art by Oumou Khaïry Diallo

#CanadaWeWant Recommendations

The #CanadaWeWant Conference took place March 3 to 10, 2020 at YMCA Cedar Glen in Nobleton, Ontario. Nearly 200 youth and adult allies from across Canada attended the conference to discuss a variety of topics and to develop recommendations and materials to illustrate what youth want to see in their country. The conference served as the anchor for the #CanadaWeWant Youth Movement throughout the year.

The conference brought together young people from coast-to-coast-to-coast representing all elements of diversity and Canadian identity. The majority of attendees were under 19 years-old (72%) with representation from every province as well as from Nunavut and Yukon Territories. More than half identified as women/girls (56%), 39% identified as boys/men, and 7% identified as gender nonconforming. We had attendees from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds (please see infographic), with 88% being



born in Canada. 35% identified as queer or questioning and 67% as heterosexual. Young people spoke a variety of languages as well, including English, French, and many Indigenous languages.

Conference participants were invited to join one of eight "Theme Teams." Each theme team worked together towards a common purpose; some explored the topic and issues facing young people in Canada in an open-ended way and suggested ways to meet those challenges. Other teams worked directly on questions or challenges brought to them by different organizations or government departments.

Theme Team Recommendations

Youth Policy in Action: The team reviewed and assessed Canada's existing Youth Policy to determine how it can be turned into concrete action. The team began the process of providing input to Canada's first ever "State of the Youth Report", and recommended the creation of direct-to-youth incentivized systems for annual accountability to youth on national Youth Policy process.

Authentic Social Identity Formation (SIF) and Mental Health: This group reviewed the SCC's SIF to evaluate the Project Model giving direction on next steps. The team refined the model and recommended providing safe spaces online and offline for young people to explore and share their authentic selves, build connections with diverse peer groups, and share their emotions without fear of judgement or reprisal.

The Future of Public Education in Canada: The team educated young people at the Conference about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), specifically the right to a quality education. They worked together to find creative solutions for the Future of Public Education in Canada initiative so that current and future students experience a high-quality education that respects their rights. The team proposed creating a national curriculum and training standards for teachers, implementation of key curriculum updates, and increased community participation in schools.

#ThisIsCanada - Canada Through Our Lens: Young people worked together to identify gaps in history curricula across Canada that they experienced related to diversity. The team recommended correcting current curricula to

address the lack of focus on different minority groups that are significant in Canadian history.

International Experience Canada: The team explored how to encourage young people to better take advantage of international work and volunteer opportunities, identifying barriers that may be preventing them from doing so. They recommended educating parents about international work, travel options and their benefits, and negotiating new Youth Mobility Agreements (YMAS) with more diverse countries outside of the Anglosphere to lessen Canadians of colour feeling excluded or uninterested in the program.

Healthy Relationships: This team explored what a healthy relationship looks like, sounds like, and feels like. The group built intentional relationships from within, and engaged in community building during the conference to model healthy relationships. They recommended naming relationships as healthy or unhealthy when they are, building awareness across generations, and creating action in communities.

#MyEnvironment: The group explored the deep-rooted government systems contributing to climate change. They recommended increasing youth environmental advisory councils and committees on provincial, territorial and municipal levels, and increasing financial support for youth leading environmental stewardship and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Sharing the Stories (StS): This team told the story of the conference, gathering and analysing data, taking photos, making videos, designing graphics, recording interviews, and finding ways to creatively share information. They recommended building a year-round youth StS team to assist SCC staff in following up with delegates to continue to tell their stories post-conference.

WEEK 6
SEMAINE 6

The Students Commission
Comité d'Étudiants
La commission des étudiants
Le conseil d'élèves

Virtual Activities
Activités virtuelles

Mouvement #leCanadaquenosouhaitons

WEDNESDAY MERCREDI	THURSDAY JEUDI	SATURDAY SAMEDI
<p>Activity: #MyEnvironment with Ren & Zahra!</p> <p>Activité : #MonEnvironnement avec Ren et Zahra !</p> <p>Quand / When? 18h EST</p>	<p>Activity: State of the youth report with Jen!</p> <p>Activité : Rapport sur l'état des jeunes avec Jen !</p> <p>Quand / When? 18h EST</p>	<p>Activity: Dance along Aerobics with Taina!</p> <p>Activité : De la danse à l'aérobic avec Taina !</p> <p>Quand / When? 18h EST</p>

Original comic art by Oumou Khaïry Diallo and Paige Schacher

Turning Knowledge into Action and Action into Knowledge

Sharing the Stories: In light of the pandemic, we accelerated the shift to an online programming model and swiftly developed COVID-19 evaluation tools and a process for submitting data electronically. We secured renewed funding with the Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) and onboarded Cohort 7 to the platform, which consisted of 43 new partner organisations. We also worked with 11 new independent subscribers. Some of our new subscribers include AfroWaveTO, ANKOBFA Fatherhood Initiative, Association of Francophone Communities of Ottawa (ACFO), Black Family Advisory Bureau Team (BFAB), Black Moms Connection, The Bridge Co-Net, Carizon, Community Living Ontario, Earthling Art Collective, Educate Her, Empowerment Squared, Family Fuse, Girl Power'd, Hooyo, IFAPID, Kingston Community Health Centre, Kinxfolk, Level U Somali Centre for Family Services, Miziwe Biik, Parents of Black Children, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, Project UP, Rise in STEM, Rivers of Hope Collective, Say Somaali, Shoot for Peace, and Sisterhood Hub. Over 300 unique programs and organizations have participated in the StS platform since 2011. Over 13,307 youth have submitted their unique perspectives to the platform.

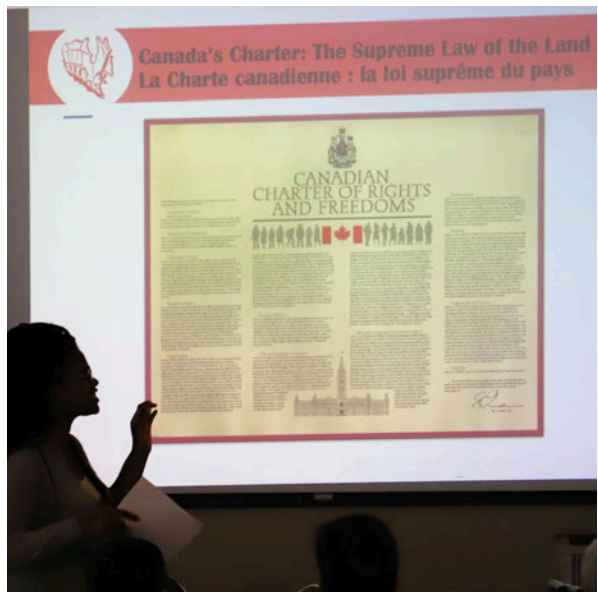
Rainbow Youth Leadership Curriculum : Through the Belleville & Quinte West Community Health Centre, young people came together to take part in a participatory action research (PAR) project. The study focused on understanding young people's experiences with leadership in the local LGBTQ2S+ community, and understanding their perspectives on what an impactful youth leadership program could look like. This group developed a research strategy and gathered input from young people through 6 focus groups and a survey completed by 37 participants aged 14-26.

Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE):

The CEYE collaborated with UNICEF Canada to develop an international research project interviewing young people aged 11 – 19 to understand their experiences and views on COVID-19. The CEYE engaged youth on our newly established Facilitator Roster to form an advisory group contributing to the research. Findings will enable the perspectives of young people to inform policy and practice responses to the COVID-19 situation and future crises. The study will also track the impacts of the pandemic on young people in Africa and Italy.

Generativity Project : The SCC in partnership with Bishop’s University contributed to groundbreaking research on Generativity, a new field of study that focuses on young peoples’ desire to leave a legacy through care and contributions for future generations. The CEYE nominated and interviewed generative exemplars across Canada to uncover the developmental roots of generativity, and how it is presented in emerging adulthood.

National Youth Leadership Team (NYLT) : We continued our multi-year project with Health Canada’s NYLT on tobacco, vaping, and cannabis use. Grounded in the Influence in Action Theory, the program is focussed on supporting youth in the development of their critical-thinking skills so that they can positively influence the health habits of their peers. Strong relationship-building helped the team continue their work despite not being able to maintain their in-person events due to the pandemic. NYLT youth participants developed a survey to gain an understanding of how COVID-19 has affected Vaping, Cannabis and tobacco products during the pandemic. The survey was completed by peers in their home communities, and the NYLT shared their findings at our Knowledge Exchange event in November 2020.



ONLINE SAFETY: SYSTEMIC CHANGE TO PREVENT CYBERVIOLENCE AGAINST YOUTH



According to studies, around 1 in 4 people have been victims of cyberviolence, and that especially girls and women are even more likely to be targeted online. Sexism and gender stereotyping are found to be two big reasons for the negative treatment of women and girls online.



@STUDENTS COMMISSION

"I'd keep it in mind that things that were brought up were to stay within the group if needed so."

– Social Identity Formation and Mental Health, youth participant

"I've learned that everyone is coming to this space with some trauma or vulnerability. I've learned that the four pillars come in to play with our conversation topics in this group and everyday life more than I originally thought."

– Social Identity Formation and Mental Health, youth participant

"I will remember how good it feels to share my ideas and have people listen to them and vice versa."

– Youth participant



Strengthening the Network

#CanadaWeWant Youth Conference: Days before the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic, we were fortunate to be able to host our annual in-person conference bringing together 155 youth aged 12-25 and 25 adult allies from every province and territory. The conference convened north of Toronto from March 3 to March 10. Participants were invited to choose a theme team topic that interested them. Each team explored the topic together as a small group, coming together to propose a recommendation on the #CanadaWeWant. The conference culminated with a showcase event hosted by RBC Future Launch where youth presented their findings to other young people, youth-serving organizations, RBC employees, and government officials.

#CanadaWeWant Youth Movement: A long-time goal of the SCC has been to establish a roster of youth facilitators coast-to-coast-to-coast. This dream was realized in August 2020 as we recruited 50 youth representing diverse communities across Canada. Young people on the roster met once per month, identifying a project to be closely connected to in a “hands-on” role, and supporting the delivery of the #CanadaWeWant Conference & virtual events. The transition to a virtual environment has made many programs more accessible and allowed us to engage over 1500 young people over the course of the year.

Knowledge Exchange: We hosted our annual Knowledge Exchange, a three-day virtual event to share research, findings, and promising practices from the Canadian youth sector. The event was centred on the #CanadaWeWant four guiding lenses: Truth Leading to Reconciliation, Rural Remote and Northern Communities, Children’s Rights, and Structural Racism. The virtual format allowed us to expand our reach engaging over 300 academics, youth service providers, and young people coast-to-coast-to-coast. Participating network partners included TakingITGlobal, People for Education, Muslim Association of Canada, Saskatchewan Alliance for Youth and Community Wellbeing (SAYCW), Mentor Canada and UNICEF. The Honourable Bardish Chagger, Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, also attended the event.

Soul circle
 Black community healing together
 This Friday June 5th
 6PM to 8PM EST
 ONLINE

What: An accountable space for Black people to discuss how they are feeling.

- Share our feelings
- Discuss healthy coping mechanisms
- Create something beautiful (through dancing or writing)

Open to all ages, all gender identities and all other underrepresented Black communities.

To participate, communicate with @studentscommission or taina@studentscommission.ca

#ALLBLACKLIVESMATTER



Social Identity Formation & Mental Health: Through the multi-year funded PHAC Mental Health Intervention Program, we continued our work to support the creation of ‘Safer Spaces’ in online and offline settings providing opportunities for young people to explore and share their authentic self, build connections with diverse peer groups, and share their emotions without fear of judgement or reprisal. We are partnering with Mentor Canada into the coming year to engage 30 of their mentors in Safer Spaces training, and will track the impact and outcomes of the process to see how creating a safe space can amplify mentorship with young people.

“I learned that we need more lessons about healthy relationships in our communities and school curriculums.”

- Be the Program, youth participant

Be the Program: We continued to support our national network of local grassroots partners in delivering our PHAC funded teen-dating violence intervention research project. Partner organizations across the country with existing youth groups or committees hosted influencer trainings to address teen-dating violence and relationship health. The project was launched in Fall 2018 and continues until 2023. In 2020, we adapted our program to be delivered both online and in-person according to the needs that our partner sites identified. We also grew from 13 partner organizations to 18 locations across the country.

“I learned that around Canada we are lacking in knowledge of healthy relationships and programs to help. Not enough people have the resources of knowing what a healthy relationship is.”

- Be the Program, youth participant





Strengthening the Node

Culture & Values: 2020 saw the creation of a Culture & Values function to support the growing node. Culture & Values established and streamlined a number of internal processes & systems, moving the SCC to a digital format in light of the pandemic. Policies were put in place to support staff including bonus paid days off, personal days for full-time staff that can be used for overall wellness & health, and home office equipment coordination & coverage.

Investing in Technology: We also established a technical team to move our Sharing the Stories (StS) platform forward. The team successfully migrated data from Versions 4 & 5 to Version 6, supported changes prompted by COVID-19 including a new suite of tools, and identified needs & priorities to enhance the platform.

Nobody's Born A Racist 2.0: We embarked on a 10-year journey to continue and strengthen efforts to address structural racism in Canada, starting from within. Individual staff members, volunteers, and network partners were supported in their own individual journeys to identify what they need to learn and unlearn.

Finance & Governance: With the help of the Federal government's wage and rent subsidy programs, we were able to weather the financial storm that arose from the pandemic. Our continued efforts to seek out diversified revenue streams ensured no major staffing changes were required, and that we could continue to execute our social purpose. We also revamped our governance framework, putting in place policies for our Board of Directors and creating a new role responsible for facilitating board activities. 2021 will see the creation of committees and a thoughtful Board recruitment & fit assessment process.

"Respect towards others and how to listen. I heard very powerful stories and their voices were heard."

- Youth participant

*"I've learned that I'm happy with
the person that I've become and that I have a
stronger support system than I originally thought.
I've also learned that I'm not alone."*

Financial Summary

- Youth participant

Year	Revenue	Expenses	Excess of revenue over expenditures	Due to founding directors	General Fund Balance, beginning of year	General Fund Balance, end of year	SCC GICs
2020	2,150,093	2,134,403	15,690	0	61,628	77,318	125,592
2019	2,081,386	2,036,715	44,671	0	16,957	61,628	108,940
2018	1,735,968	1,738,368	-2,400	0	19,357	16,957	107,586
2017	1,368,261	1,366,866	1395	0	17962	19357	86,750
2016	1,211,867	1,199,627.00	12240	0	5722	17962	85,778
2015	921,356	885,427	35929	0	-30,207	5,722	84,843
2014	914,639	853,103	61,536	0	-91,743	-30,207	83,707
2013	825,275	837,560	-12,285	51,728	-79,458	-91,743	82,025
2012	681,944	749,782	-67,838	51,728	-11,620	-79,458	80,000
2011	1,013,108	952,979	60,128	64,682	-71,748	-11,620	
2010	1,094,619	1,201,369	-106,750	77,068	35,002	-71,748	
2009	1,508,729	1,431,952	76,777	88,909	-41,775	35,002	
2008	1,465,939	1,451,311	14,628	100,230	-56,403	-168,460	
2007	1,227,144	1,115,087	112,057	111,054	-41,775	-56,403	
2006	1,716,720	1,654,750	61,970	121,356	-230,430	-168,460	
2005	1,746,775	1,693,191	53,584	121,356	-284,014	-230,430	
2004	1,547,784	1,597,036	-49,252	120,758	-234,762	-284,014	
2003	1,235,484	1,452,942	-217,458	164,015	-17,305	-234,763	
2002	1,704,434	1,692,162	12,272	164,015	-29,577	-17,305	
2001	2,359,061	2,360,152	-1,091	164,015	-28,486	-29,577	
2000	1,406,401	1,408,204	-1,803	164,015	-26,683	-28,486	
1999	796,842	800,310	-3,467	164,015			
1998	448,019	447,829	190	164,015			
1997	765,676	710,354	55,322	164,015			
1996	160,501	152,206	8,294	164,015			
1995	153,619	162,029	-8,410	164,015			
1994	294,115	276,142	17,973				
1993	25,467	31,467	-6,000				
1992	142,103	134,093	8,010				
1991	unincorporated						



Throughout the week, safe spaces were a central topic of youth's discussion, so they defined the elements that make up a safe space.

1

The space must be RELAXED & SILLY



Bonding games



Variety of activities



Timing the workshop



Throughout the week, safe spaces were a central topic of youth's discussion, so they defined the elements that make up a safe space.

2

The space & the group must be COMFORTABLE



Basic comfort

Provide...



Freedom & choice



Opportunity to share anonymously



Throughout the week, safe spaces were a central topic of youth's discussion, so they defined the elements that make up a safe space.

3

The space must provide the assurance of SAFETY



Properly articulate and prepare for difficult issues

Understand who is coming to the group



Throughout the week, safe spaces were a central topic of youth's discussion, so they defined the elements that make up a safe space.

4

Focus on creating equality & shared ownership of the space

Use processes that create a sense of equality



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To follow live updates from the SCC, make sure to follow the hashtag #CanadaWeWant and the @studentscommission on Instagram, Facebook, and @StdntsCmmsnTwitter!