

**Canada  
World  
Youth**



**Jeunesse  
Canada  
Monde**

## CWY National Aboriginal Consultation



May 27 and 28 2010  
Edmonton, Alberta

*"It changed my life"*

*"A program that changes your life and gives you different perspectives on the world"*

*CWY Aboriginal alumni*

## 1. Overview

---

On May 27 and 28, Canada World Youth hosted a consultation meeting to strengthen programming in regards to serving Aboriginal youth and communities in Canada. Canada World Youth recognizes the unique status and cultural diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and peoples and is committed to strengthen its collaboration with Aboriginal organizations, making its programs more accessible and offering a positive experience for all Aboriginal youth involved.

In order to best achieve this, select recent Aboriginal alumni along with community organizations working with Aboriginal youth were invited to participate in a consultation meeting. This consultation provided an opportunity to review current CWY programs and identify ways to strengthen our programs to better reflect the realities of Aboriginal youth. It also provided opportunities to share experiences and explore opportunities for future collaboration.

On May 27, 10 recent alumni from CWY programs along with an elder were invited to reflect on their complete experience during the program, share the highlights and challenges they encountered (counterpart, project supervisor support, host community, volunteer site, group dynamics, host family, educational activity days, etc., both in Canada and in the exchange country) and identify actions that could be taken to overcome these challenges. Alumni were also invited to provide suggestions about the best approach to ensure that more Aboriginal youth would apply to CWY programs.

On May 28, 10 representatives from 8 different Aboriginal organizations working with youth joined the meeting. The consultation allowed for extensive sharing of experiences for working with Aboriginal youth, and for discussing needs, opportunities, challenges and interests. The meeting also provided opportunities to explore possible future collaboration.

## 2. Participants

---

Organization	Representative(s)
National Aboriginal Health Organization	Karin Kettler Damian Abrahams
Inuit Tapiirit Kanatami	Shelly Watkins
Boyle Street Education Centre	Shirley Minard
Assembly of First Nations - Quebec	Serge Rock
National Association of Friendship Centres	Ashlee Cochrane
AFN Edmonton – National Youth Council representative	Noelani Avveduti
Alberta Native Friendship Centre	Canadian Native Friendship Centre: Brad Carlson, Alberta National Youth Rep: Jamie Linington
White Buffalo Youth Lodge	Darlene Speidel

Alumni	Community	Program
Karlee Ladouceur	Fort Chipewyan, AB	Kenya-MB (2009/10)
Patrick Wood	Winnipeg, MB	Ontario-India HIV/AIDS (2006/07)
Chelsey Smith	Inuvik, NWT	Victoria-Ukraine (2009/10)
Lucy Kappianaq	Iglolik, NU	Ontario-Honduras Women's (2009/10)
Danielle Wilson-Brown	Vancouver, BC	Kenya-Tanzania (2006/07)
Ashley Reimer	Alberta Beach, AB	Brasil-QC (2007/08)
Tara Toulouse	Toronto, ON	Ontario-India (2006/07)
Marie-Joelle Moreau	Betsiamites, QC	Ontario-India (2008/09)
Zack O'Brien	La Range, SK	Ontario-Tanzania (2003/04) & RDX
Michelle Zoe	Rae-Edzo, NWT	Ukraine-BC (2008/09)

Ms. Irene Fraser, was also invited to provide guidance to the meeting as an elder.

### **3. Results of the consultation**

---

#### General feedback from Alumni

Feedback provided by Alumni strongly confirmed the value of CWY programs for Aboriginal Youth. Many indicated that it had changed their lives

*I learned tools I can use for the rest of my life*

*Canada World Youth was a Once in a lifetime experience that truly changes your life perspective on the world. You learn so much...*

But alumni also indicated participating in the program was a challenging experience for them, given their specific reality and in many cases their circumstances. Feedback received strongly indicated that the experience of Aboriginal youth is different from many other youth and that special consideration needs to be given to Aboriginal youth participants. Some of the challenges they identified were:

- Adapting to a new culture (both in Canada and internationally) and language barriers.
- Administrative components for youth living in isolated communities (passport, medical, etc.).
- Feelings of isolation and marginalization (including with the other Canadians).
- Length of the process which diminished motivation.

They also raised some important points regarding the way to approach Aboriginal Peoples' questions within the program:

- Need for project supervisors to be well trained and to have more resources available.
- Avoid asking youth to be ambassadors for 'Aboriginal peoples'.
- Increase Aboriginal content in YLA:
  - Increase aspect on Aboriginal cultures and diversity in orientation.
  - Avoid approaching Aboriginal peoples realities in Canada as tokenism ('we did a smudging and discuss Aboriginal peoples for 30 min and that was it for the rest of the program').
  - Recognize diversity among Aboriginal peoples and the wide range of lived realities.
  - Integrate some work projects with strong elements on culture.
- Increase support during program (e.g. access to elder, create an Aboriginal youth committee during the program).
- Give them the opportunity to debrief with other Aboriginal youth who have had similar experiences.

- Ensure that Aboriginal youth are not alone in their team but are grouped in teams and potentially having multiple youth from a given group (First Nations, Métis or Inuit) as realities between different Aboriginal peoples differ greatly.

Alumni also indicated their willingness to:

- Establish a network of alumni to support new volunteers and promote CWY programs.
- Be ambassadors of CWY in their communities and regions and with other Aboriginal youth.
- Recruit youth.
- Support other Aboriginal youth by acting as mentors, including in their fundraising efforts.
- Participate in events to promote the program.

#### General feedback from Aboriginal organizations

The organizations present all recognized the positive impact the program had on youth from their communities (*our youth are imprisoned in their communities and reserves, it is critical for them to travel to open their mind*) and their willingness to collaborate with CWY at the different levels.

- Supporting recruitment efforts.
- Connecting with their communities and youth.
- Collaborating in an advisory committee and in the development and implementation of Indigenous programming.
- Acting as host communities and host organizations for YLA exchanges.
- Provide cultural experiences and training.
- Use Aboriginal organizations as resource centres (meeting place, facilities, etc.).

#### Recruitment

- Build on connections with alumni, partner organizations and host communities to recruit.
- Important to build on existing networks (e.g. Aboriginal youth network in Quebec), a lot of Aboriginal youth still don't know about the program. All organizations offered to share information on CWY programs within their own networks.
- Adapt communication material (maybe develop a specific poster that speaks to Aboriginal communities).
- Gather quotes from Aboriginal alumni; creation of Aboriginal profiles (that could be used for promotion purposes).
- Provide alumni with resources for recruitment and to share their experiences with others in their communities.
- Community radio stations are a great way to spread the word (participate in phone interviews).
- Create a specific email that partner organizations can disseminate within their network.
- Direct contact (phone or face to face) is very important.
- Publish an article in Inuit Youth magazine.
- Target areas where Aboriginal youth are (concerts, malls, etc.).

Participants also strongly suggested that CWY increases its participation in Aboriginal conferences to strengthen its connections and recruit more youth. Conferences identified included:

- NAFC Annual General Meeting – July 13-16 (Hinton, AB).
- Northern Youth Conference in Inuvik in August.
- Dream Catchers Conference Edmonton – October.
- Saskatchewan Aboriginal Youth Conference in Saskatoon in January.
- BC Aboriginal Youth Conference in March 2011.

#### Suggestions regarding fundraising

- CWY should work with Tribes and Band Councils.

- Target municipalities and land claim organizations (North).
- Aboriginal Alumni help support fundraising efforts of new volunteers.
- Create a scholarship fund.

#### Suggestions regarding CWY Aboriginal programming

Alumni and organizations were very supportive of CWY developing new Aboriginal programming (as part of the YLA or as new initiatives): *"it is absolutely necessary", "A must", "CWY would spearhead something very innovative"*. In particular:

- Alumni suggested the idea of an Indigenous exchange within the YLA.
- Many also stressed the importance of Inter-Canadian exchanges, the need to "Open doors between Aboriginal communities".
- Several stressed the values of using YLA communities to build the Aboriginal program.
- A suggestion was also made to link with developed countries (USA, New Zealand).

Participants also provided suggestions regarding what the content of an Aboriginal program should be:

- Importance of focusing on culture and language as key components, strengthen cultural pride and sense of belonging.
- Have youth learn about their culture and other cultures.
- Connect with tradition (in particular for Aboriginal youth in urban areas). Include aspects on spirituality and ceremonies.
- Develop knowledge and skills (life skills, employment skills, empowerment, and cultural competencies). Reinforce self-esteem by learning about culture, should develop open minds.
- Explore common situations and struggles and how to overcome them.
- Bridge the gap between natives and non-natives.
- Networking is key (for organizations and individuals).
- Make it more directly linked to the reality of Aboriginal communities – more useful to face challenges encountered.
- Specific content aspects mentioned included:
  - Overview of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and in the exchange country.
  - Arts (promotion of Aboriginal artists).
  - Politics (treaties, economic development).
  - Language (learning Aboriginal languages).
  - First Nations' perspective on the environment.
  - Promotion of health (holistic learning, healthy living).

Participants also strongly indicated that if CWY was to seriously engage in Aboriginal programming, it should increase representation of Aboriginal peoples within the organizations by:

- Hiring an Aboriginal program coordinator.
- Increasing the number of Aboriginal project supervisors.

## **4. Conclusion**

---

The meeting was a great opportunity for Aboriginal alumni and Aboriginal organizations to connect with each other and learn about CWY (vision, mission, strategic plan and priorities). It provided very valuable input for the review of certain aspects of the YLA as well as for the development of new Aboriginal programming.

This meeting also provided a great opportunity for CWY to establish strong links with alumni as well as with Aboriginal organizations.

Some aspects of the meeting proved to be critical for its success:

- Engaging Aboriginal alumni in the meeting and providing the space to debrief their experience with peers and to share it with CWY.
- Participation of Aboriginal facilitator and Elder is necessary.
- Importance of presenting alumni and organizations with whom are the Aboriginal youth participating in CWY programs this year.

### Recommendations / Next steps

Suggestions for the next steps presented during the meeting included:

- Create a committee (steering or advisory) with organizations and alumni to support CWY Aboriginal programming development.
- Create an Aboriginal alumni network:
  - Connect with CWY alumni groups to build from their experience and ensure coherence.
  - Organize a meeting with a core group of key Aboriginal alumni to build their capacity to launch the network.
  - Create database – list of Aboriginal alumni and share it with participants in the consultation.
- Utilize alumni as mentors to future volunteers to support them with fundraising and preparations.
- Hire an intern to support YLA Aboriginal alumni this year.
- Insert CWY Aboriginal alumni profiles on CWY website and include these in promotional material.
- Ensure that CWY connects with Tribe and Band Councils in communities where programs are implemented.
- Explore how Aboriginal alumni and organizations could participate in the learning forum.
- Explore possibility of hiring an Aboriginal program coordinator.
- Ensure that alumni are informed and encouraged to apply for positions at CWY, including internships and field staff.

Based on input received during the consultation and through other means, CWY will develop in July a plan of action to strengthen its aboriginal programming. .

## Appendix 1 - Agenda

*Thursday, May 27, 2010*

Time	Activity
8:45	Gather in the meeting room <i>Room 9-207 (Robbins Health Centre – Grant MacEwan College)</i>
9:00	Elder welcome and prayer - Irene Fraser
9:15	CWY Welcome – Fred
9:15-9:30	General introductions, objectives, overview of the agenda
9:30-10:40	Sharing Circe to illustrate the diversity of experiences – Tobias
10:40-10:55	BREAK
10:55-11:10	Bring highlights back to the group, review the list and ask if there are glaring omissions
11:15-12:00	Small group reflection and develop some recommendations for Aboriginal participation
12:00-12:30	Group Reports & Q/A
12:30-1:45	LUNCH
1:45-2:15	CWY review and response to recommendations
2:15-2:45	Does CWY need an Indigenous Exchange?
2:45-3:00	BREAK
3:00-3:30	Alumni and youth to prepare collective presentation to invited organizations Staff to debrief and collect main points and prepare for the evening
3:30-4:00	General debrief
4:00	Elder reflection and closing – Irene Fraser

*Friday, May 28, 2010*

8:15	Breakfast
8:45	Welcome by Irene Fraser
9:00	CWY opening remarks
9:00-9:20	Introductions Overview of agenda and objectives for the day
9:20-10:30	Organizational presentations Q/A and discussion
10:30-10:45	BREAK
10:45-11:00	What is CWY? Official version
11:00-11:30	Alumni presentation
11:30-12:00	Q/A
12:00-1:15	Lunch
1:15-2:15	Explore common territory: short and long term
2:15-2:45	Next steps
2:45-3:00	Break
3:00-3:30	Closing thoughts by all participants
3:30 -4:15	Elder reflection and closing