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2015

YOUTH COUNCIL

2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT



Edmonton

ITS MISSION

The 2014-2015 City of Edmonton Youth Council undertook a solemn duty to educate and empower youth, to provide meaningful input and to take action on local issues and municipal politics in Edmonton.

These stories tell how it mobilized the city's youth on local issues, empowered them to be active citizens and gave them the opportunity to participate and be heard!

EDUCATE

A Message From the Fearless Council Chairperson.

It's been a big year for the City of Edmonton Youth Council. In fact, I think it's fair to say that this was our biggest year ever. Our committee has a lot to be proud of, and we are excited to share this year's accomplishments with you in our annual report.

This year, we made a documentary that tackled youth homelessness and screened it for thousands of people. We brought together Edmonton's top young artists and empowered them to reimagine public spaces. We changed our own meeting practices to make ourselves as environmentally sustainable as possible. We lent our voice in

the fight to save Edmonton's historic buildings. We

proclaimed mental health week in front of thousands of students.

We selected Edmonton's first ever youth poet laureate. We met with councillors from across Alberta to give them the tools they need to create their own youth councils. We took on provincial legislation that violated the human rights of LGBTQ youth in Alberta, and walked in our first-ever Pride Parade.

This is just a selection of our accomplishments. Most importantly, this year we showed that you don't have to be a "grown up" to make change in Edmonton. We showed the city, the province and the country that youth voices matter. We are not the leaders of tomorrow; we are the leaders of today.

It has been an honour to represent the City of Edmonton Youth Council as the 2014-15 chairperson. I can't wait to see what next year has in store.



Claire Edwards, Chairperson

OUR HEROES CAME FROM EVERY WALK OF LIFE TO REPRESENT 13 TO 23-YEAR-OLDS FROM EVERY CORNER OF THIS CITY.

2014-2015 City of Edmonton Youth Council (CEYC) Committee Members

Claire Edwards (Chairperson)
Tempo Sabatier (Vice-Chairperson)
Alex MacRae-Korobkov (Vice-Chairperson)
Mohamed Ali Marina Banister
Liza Chatterjee Yiwei Chen
Tianna LeBlanc Aurora Leddy
Felicity Liu Kaeleigh Pasula
Joanne Picard Marlene Rong
Carmen Somerville Quinten Starko
Meghana Valupadas



When the CEYC members were announced in September 2014 on Twitter, the tweet received about 5,200 impressions and a group photo received 4,000!

EMPOWER!

THE CEYC HAD A BIG MISSION TO ACCOMPLISH, AND ITS TRUSTED ADVISOR WAS WITH THEM EVERY STEP OF THE WAY...

The City of Edmonton Youth Council truly found its voice this past year as the members took leadership positions on major issues impacting youth such as youth homelessness and Gay-Straight Alliances.

Not only did it bring together youth from all backgrounds to work on solutions to challenges facing youth, the rest of the city witnessed the council's inspiring work and now looks to the Youth Council to provide an import perspective on all topics that impact youth in our city.

The work of the members of the Youth Council proves that youth are not 'leaders of tomorrow' they are simply leaders.



Councillor Andrew Knack, Youth Council Advisor

CEYC MEMBERS FORMED SUBCOMMITTEES, COMBINING THEIR FORCES AND PASSION TO DO GOOD.

Health and Wellness Subcommittee

“Me, too” are the words with power against the villainous stigma and isolation which attack youth living with mental illness.

Members recruited their ally, The Canadian Mental Health Association, to fight back with empathy, education, conversation, fresh air, and exercise.

WeWalkYEG, held monthly across the city, raised awareness and gave youth facing mental illness an opportunity to connect with others.



Sustainability Subcommittee

Champions of the earth, the Sustainability Subcommittee brought forth bold motions that would reduce its collective environmental footprint and would encourage the concept of sustainable food.

LATER THAT TERM...

- Vegan foods are served with reusable utensils at meetings
- Meetings are paperless
- Activities are waste-free
- Motion presented to City Council to follow suit, sparking conversation in Edmonton and beyond

Youth Council will pursue its motion with a presentation to Council Services in the fall... **STAY TUNED!**

COLLABORATION, COMMUNITY AND... COMPOSTING?

The Subcommittee found an ally in the Parkallen Community Garden to meet its objectives of connecting the neighbourhood with the garden and making sure members understood the power of composting and sustainable consumption.

Strong, sustainability-minded youth from across the city volunteered to educate homeowners, provide them with compost bag to fill, then to collect them for delivery and composting at the Parkallen Community Garden.

Success was measured by the 30 youth volunteers who participated, the approximately 1,500 homes that were reached, and the fact that more than enough compostable material was collected for the community garden.

Not only did the volunteer youth rally the citizens of Parkallen to contribute, they built relationships between themselves, the community garden and neighbours!

Engagement Subcommittee

The Engagement Subcommittee knows it is critical to build a city where all voices matter. This is being accomplished by empowering youth to speak up and speak out with confidence. So, these strategic thinkers tackled the challenge of developing a long-term plan for how CEYC communicates with and encourages youth to meet that goal.

These mighty minds identified important facts through tireless research and surveys.

Learnings included:

- How CEYC now engages with youth
- New methods of engagement they could use
- How to make CEYC meetings more efficient
- How and why groups of youth may be overlooked or underrepresented by CEYC
- The ways youth get involved with civic matters
- Why CEYC members feel it is important to get involved

From its discoveries, the Engagement Subcommittee hatched a plan with recommendations to eliminate barriers and empower youth to be involved and to be heard.

Its success is simple: more youth at general assemblies, engaging with the CEYC on social media and getting involved in projects and activities.



During its term, the council engaged 560 new Twitter users to bring the follower count to 1,337. With 617 tweets, it achieved 140,000 impressions.



Likes increased by 37% to 645 and posts reached an average of 576 users for updates. It increased to 773 when a link or photo was included.

ENGAGE!

THROUGH MY EYES

There are youth who face challenges in this fine city. There are youth who are vulnerable, at-risk, homeless.

Through My Eyes is the story of a city that must look inside itself to solve these problems.

Two of Edmonton's brightest and youngest up-and-coming film makers created this profound call to action. It tells an amazing story of perseverance and the struggle to survive the realities of homelessness, while hammering home the fact that such struggles can, and must, be made easier by governmental and community support.

These problems are real, they are harsh, but they are not insurmountable.

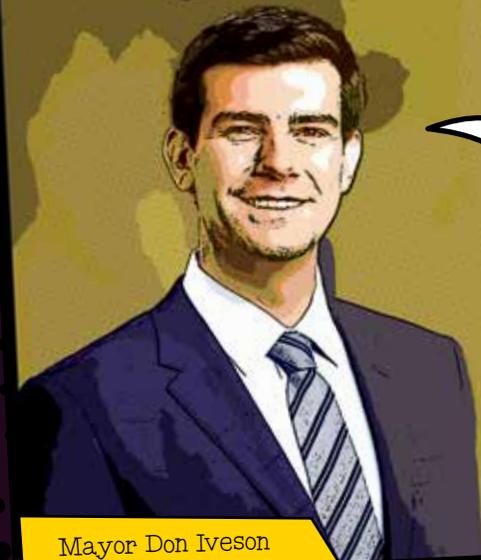
Through My Eyes was made in consultation with experts, homeless and at-risk youth, and the public.

CEYC steered this major project in parallel with Mayor Iveson's Taskforce to End Poverty and its mandate to support the well-being of youth and to bring their important issues to light.



The hashtag #tmeffilm was mentioned 59 times and had 8,100 tweet impressions, and a film photo saw 6,300 impressions and was retweeted 28 times!

empower



Mayor Don Iveson

The impassioned and impactful work of the City of Edmonton's Youth Council never ceases to amaze me. From telling the story of homeless and at-risk youth, to advocating for our vulnerable young LGBTQ citizens, this small but mighty group is having a real and lasting positive influence on our city, proving that there is phenomenal power in the voices of our young people. We just need to give them the opportunity to speak.

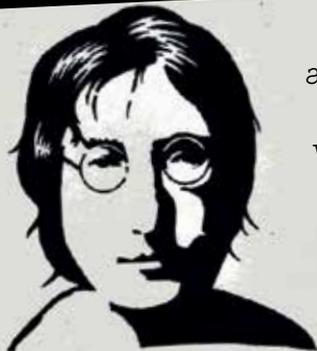
MEANWHILE... YOUTH ARE USING THEIR CREATIVE MINDS TO FIND INGENUOUS SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES THEY FACE.

Make Something Monday: Art in the City of Edmonton

The power of Edmonton's creative minds is harnessed with each edition of Make Something Monday. The ingenuity of CEYC brought students from across the city together to focus on ways to support Edmonton's artistic community, bringing more art to the streets.

The imaginative youth re-examined the city's graffiti policy, and looked at ways art can promote mental health. Professional artists and members of the Edmonton Community Foundation inspired and supported participating youth to realize their creative ideas that make Edmonton a more beautiful and welcoming city for all.

YOUTH POET LAUREATE



"My role in society, or any artist or poet's role, is to try and express what we all feel. Not to tell people how to feel. Not as a preacher, not as a leader, but as a reflection of us all."

- John Lennon

Each youth in Edmonton has something important and unique to say and they now have a voice in Charlotte Cranston. The CEYC worked with the Edmonton Poet Laureate, the City of Edmonton, and Youth Write to create the role of Youth Poet Laureate and we are proud to be only the second city in Canada to do so!

Poet Charlotte Cranston will create and perform original poems to speak on behalf of Edmonton youth, and is working on a project to help youth find their own voices through poetry.



We send you the biggest congrats @thepoetprincess and are so excited to work with you to bring voice to youth poetry! #yegarts



We are pleased to announce the selection of Youth Poet Laureate on our webpage. Congrats Charlotte, we are excited for this role! #yegarts



A tweet announcing the Youth Poet Laureate received 1,468 impressions.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

The eyes of Albertans and Canadians were on the CEYC when it spoke out loudly not only on behalf of Edmonton youth, but all youth in this province.

Bill 10 threatened students' right to form gay-straight alliances. As advisors on issues that affect youth, the CEYC went to the Edmonton City Council to seek support, and sent a letter to the premier and the education minister in opposition of the bill.

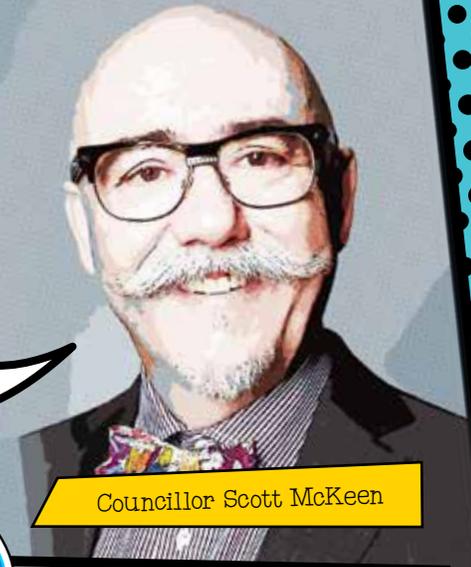
Bill 10 exploded as a trending topic on Twitter nationwide. It made headlines across the country, and gained the attention of high profile Canadians. Hundreds joined the CEYC youth on the steps of the legislature chanting "GSAs save lives!"

The CEYC and other heroes caused the Government of Alberta to amend its bill to be more inclusive to all students in the province.

The actions of the council on this issue demonstrate its commitment to its duty as representatives of Edmonton's youth - empowering them to give input and take action.

INPUT

The Youth Council brings a much needed perspective we don't always hear. Take the success of the work they did on Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs). It was incredibly important, and it gave Council an insight into the impact of GSAs beyond the LGBTQ community. The Youth Council activates our young people to engage in politics and to become involved civic citizens, which will help develop the next generation of decision makers.



Councillor Scott McKeen



An announcement of changes to the provincial legislation for GSAs had a reach of more than 3,700.



A tweet announcing that council passed a motion to oppose Bill 10 received 2,158 impressions.



Claire Edwards
@Claire_YEG

Proud to say the @EdmYouthCouncil motion to oppose #Bill10 passed 14-1. You can read it here: docs.google.com/a/uAlberta.ca/... #ableg #yegcc

CITY OF EDMONTON YOUTH COUNCIL GENERAL MEETING - DECEMBER 3, 2014

MOVED BY: Claire Edwards

SECONDED BY: Cameron Somerville

First reading

Second Reading

Third Reading

Passed by vote of 14-1

MOTION TO OPPOSE BILL 10: An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, 2014.

WHEREAS the Member of Legislative Assembly for Calgary North-West has introduced a bill called Bill 10: An Act to Amend the Bill of Rights to Protect our Children which is currently in third reading in the legislative assembly.

WHEREAS while the proposed changes in Bill 10 to amend the Alberta Bill of Rights, are steps forward, they are largely symbolic, not practical.

WHEREAS Bill 10 leaves the decision to create a Gay-Straight Alliance in the hands of the school board.

WHEREAS the legal recourse provided to students in Bill 10 is inaccessible to youth without the resources, including but not limited to time, funds, confidence, knowledge, or support to file a lawsuit against their school board, in the event that their request to form a GSA is denied.

WHEREAS denying a student the right to form a Gay-Straight Alliance is an affront to rights guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms including freedoms of association and assembly, with equal consideration under the law.

WHEREAS almost half of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students and approximately 75% of transgender students in Canada report being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation or gender expression at school, and that studies show Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) teens experience greater levels of violence and more negative health outcomes than their heterosexual peers

WHEREAS of students harassed, they reported lower grades (24%), higher absentee rates (27%), greater depression (55%), and are more likely to make plans to commit suicide (35%).

WHEREAS while "safe school" policies and "diversity clubs" are valuable, according to a study done by the Egale Human Rights Trust: "generic safe school policies that do not include specific measures on homophobia are not effective in improving the school climate for LGBTQ students."

WHEREAS numerous studies have shown that Gay-Straight Alliances are proven to substantially reduce suicide rates and promote positive health outcomes among both straight and LGBTQ students.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Edmonton Youth Council call on the Mayor of Edmonton to send a letter from City of Edmonton Youth Council addressed to Members of Legislative Assembly, the Minister of Education and the Premier of Alberta outlining the City of Edmonton Youth Council's public opposition to Bill 10: Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, 2014, in its current form.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City of Edmonton Youth Council call upon the provincial government to engage in meaningful consultation with LGBTQ and allied youth when it comes to matters relating to Gay-Straight Alliances in Alberta's schools.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



web: CEYC.ca

Twitter: [@EdmYouthCouncil](https://twitter.com/EdmYouthCouncil)

Facebook: [/edmyouthcouncil](https://facebook.com/edmyouthcouncil)

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