



TAKING STOCK OF YOUTH
WELLBEING IN BC TODAY:
A FORUM

JUNE 11, 2009



Co-sponsored with
Vancouver Foundation and PeerNetBC

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June 11, 2009 at Vancouver Community College

FORUM OVERVIEW AND THEMES

In spring 2009 First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition staff proposed a forum to look at issues facing youth in BC today as a result of the publication of a number of reports that highlighted key issues relating to youth wellbeing in BC at this time.

First Call invited coalition partner the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks and funder Vancouver Foundation to meet to discuss this proposed initiative. All the agencies agreed on the timeliness of such a meeting, and Vancouver Foundation and PeerNetBC became the event co-sponsors.

Purpose:

The purpose of this forum was to bring together youth, and the agencies that work with youth, to 'take stock' of youth wellbeing in BC and to examine the highlights of new research, identify gaps in services to youth, and focus our work on advocacy initiatives and policy recommendations to address those gaps.

Participants:

Forum information was sent to a broad range of individuals, agencies, business and government through First Call, Vancouver Foundation and other contact lists. In addition, a poster was widely distributed (*Appendix 1*). One hundred and seventy (170) people registered and one hundred and forty-four (144) attended on the day of the forum, including 40 youth aged 25 and under (*Appendix 3*).

Forum Program:

The Forum program (*Appendix 2*) began with a welcome to Coast Salish traditional territory by Elder Doris Fox. This was followed by an overview of the current context of youth demographics in BC by Mark Gifford. Members of the Vancouver Foundation Youth Vital Signs Council presented the findings of their 'I Am Vancouver' report. Duncan Stewart from McCreary Centre Society spoke to the report 'A Picture of Health: Highlights from the 2008 BC Adolescent Health Survey.'

A panel then discussed key issues and concerns of specific youth populations that included representatives from the following communities:

- Aboriginal
- Immigrant and refugee
- Youth in care
- Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and queer
- Youth living with disabilities

Panel members included:

- Rebecca Jules of Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association
- Karen deLong of BC Association for Community Living
- Chris Friesen of Immigrant Services Society of BC
- Jocelyn Helland of Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
- Lydia Luk of GAB Youth Services

Most of the panel presentations also featured young speakers involved with the above organizations.

These presentations were followed by discussion groups on key issues that impact youth wellbeing, including: housing, substance use/abuse, youth-friendly communities, education, health/safety, employment/income security, and youth in care. The discussion groups provided participants with opportunities to work together to identify current issues, services, barriers to accessing services, service gaps, potential solutions, and ways to engage youth in public policy planning and advocacy.

The group discussions were lively, with participants fully engaging in identifying core issues of concern to youth today as well as proposing solutions, advocacy and policy directions to be worked on in the future. The overarching theme that emerged in all groups was the need for communities to listen and hear what youth have to say and involve them in decision-making about programs and services that affect their lives.

Some additional key themes that emerged were lack of affordable, accessible and safe housing; the need for youth to be included in community tables and decision-making to ensure youth-friendly communities; and the need for a low barrier continuum of services for those youth with substance use and abuse challenges, including harm reduction and prevention.

The cost and availability of post-secondary education was identified as a barrier for many youth, and there was a desire expressed for increased funding to non-academic programs such as trades and arts to make these choices more accessible and affordable. The youth in care group focussed on the challenges of inconsistent support services, constantly changing support workers, and the need for youth to remain connected to family and sibling groups.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The seven topics were discussed by two groups of participants with help from facilitators from PeerNetBC, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, Office of the BC Representative for Children and Youth, BC Teachers' Federation and First Call. The specifics of those discussions are outlined below.

Housing

Group participants reported that although there are some youth serving agencies that have workers able to assist youth to find housing, the general consensus of the group was that safe and affordable housing for this cohort is extremely difficult to find. In addition, many youth 'couch-surf,' which adds to the general invisibility of the housing needs of youth.

Barriers to finding safe/affordable housing:

- Youth are not eligible for BC's Rental Assistance Program;
- Housing is hard to find for youth dealing with addictions and mental health issues;
- There is no dedicated funding at BC Housing for youth;
- Some transition houses do not accept youth;

- Lack of affordable rental housing and age limits on signing leases;
- Age discrimination, lack of references and credit history;
- Single Room Occupancy buildings are in poor condition and unsafe;
- Lack of accessible housing for disabled youth;
- Lack of transportation to conduct a search for housing.

How to improve access to housing for youth - public policy solutions:

In the discussion it was re-iterated that housing is a basic human right. Various suggestions and possible solutions were offered, including establishing youth specific co-op housing, providing low barrier housing options, and ensuring increased accessibility to low cost housing with rental subsidies. In addition, the following issues were highlighted as ways in which youth could be engaged in public policy/advocacy issues for safe and affordable housing:

- Re-establish the youth advocate at Vancouver City Hall to work on this issue;
- Set up ways to meet and engage city and provincial government officials to work on a plan for the provision of appropriate youth housing;
- Advocate for and with youth for housing; convene a youth-driven housing forum to discuss and articulate the issues.

Substance Use and Abuse

Key issues highlighted by this group were the need for coordinated services within the drug and alcohol treatment sector to increase efficiency of waitlists, referrals and support services. In addition, adequate multi-level support services, including peer support networks, should be provided to stop the ‘revolving door’ between accessing detox services and returning to the street to re-engage in substance abuse. Substance abuse and use is connected to other issues such as family breakdown, gambling, and sexual exploitation, and should be viewed in the whole context of the youth’s life experience.

Need for more school-based prevention programs:

- Use peers to discuss substance abuse issues with other peers, inform and educate in schools, especially to counteract the ‘glam’ factor that still exists with some substances;
- Need effective drug prevention programs for K-12 students that provide accurate information without using scare tactics;
- Provide school-based prevention workers;
- Provide public education to parents about drug prevention programs to allay fears.

Public policy issues to explore:

- Need for more detox beds in all communities;
- More harm reduction models need to be developed and made available;
- Ensure availability of low barrier support and intervention services in all communities;
- Balance funding between prevention services and harm reduction treatment programs;
- Provide safe spaces to use, i.e. Insite;
- Ensure services are culturally appropriate and queer-friendly.

Youth-Friendly Communities

Key issues raised by participants in this group focussed on negative stereotyping of youth and the need for youth to have a meaningful voice in community activities and decision-making processes through the establishment of community youth advisory councils. Recommendations included: ensure that youth can participate in these activities by providing transportation, bus fares and honoraria, and provide leadership and mentoring to build capacity in youth engaged in community work and volunteering.

Suggestions for creating youth-friendly communities:

- Take time to develop relationships with youth in your community – work informally with youth whenever possible to build positive relationships;
- Adults need to listen to ideas from youth - ask don't tell;
- Involve children and youth in community activities from a young age;
- Encourage volunteerism from an early age;
- Support youth organizations with adequate, sustainable funding;
- Ensure communities are inclusive and free of systemic barriers of racism, sexism, colonialism, homophobia, and ageism;
- Adult role models should provide leadership and mentoring for youth;
- Avoid criminalization of youth through media and legislation;
- Make supports available to youth other than those already involved in government care or the criminal justice system.

Advocacy:

- Government and non-profit agencies should be more open to youth involvement and input in planning programs and services;
- Identify youth advocates in your community and work with them.

Education

Existing government supports for education include the K-12 school system, youth motivation programs, and funding for youth in/from care to assist with school costs.

Barriers to education - secondary:

- Need for more non-academic programs to teach trades, arts, and life skills;
- Secondary school classes are too large – cannot cater to diverse needs of students or students with alternative learning styles;
- Inequalities are created by zoning boundaries - high income areas are able to provide enhanced schools/opportunities compared to lower income areas.

Post-secondary:

- Fees are high, and subsidies are difficult to access.

Other issues that impact education:

- Too few counsellors in schools to assist students with difficulties;
- Student councils and staff need to be there for all students to ensure a diversity of voices and services;
- Create a more open dialogue between students and school districts to create real opportunities to listen, hear and act on youth issues;
- Examine reasons why students don't engage in school and possible ways to address the issues.

Public policy issues:

- Affordable, accessible post-secondary education for all students;
- Adequate funding for K-12 system, including 'alternative' programs.

Health and Safety

The key themes that emerged from this discussion group were workplace safety issues and concern about the lack of safety measures for very young workers, gang violence both on and off reserve, unsafe housing, racism and discrimination, cyber bullying, sexual exploitation and negative peer influences.

Additional issues:

- Mental health services needed to address vulnerability of those with mental challenges;
- Immigrants and refugees experience mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression and re-location stress;
- Mental health services not always easily accessible;
- Youth forced to leave home are vulnerable to exploitation;
- Lack of recreation facilities;
- High cost of food – cheap food is unhealthy.

Policy issues to explore:

- Need for services for sexually exploited youth outside of Vancouver;
- Public education programs to enable young people to gain awareness and develop skills to deal with cyber bullying and exploitation;
- Public Health Nurses need additional training specific to dealing with youth needs and issues;
- Ensure youth-specific health services have sustainable funding;
- Protection for young workers from injury on the job;
- Establish Community Safety Officers;
- Address gang violence both on and off reserve;
- Strengthen Employment Standards Act to protect young workers from injury on the job.

Employment and Income Security

This group identified many services and programs that assist youth in obtaining training for employment; however, there are many barriers that prevent youth from accessing jobs that pay a living wage.

Barriers to full employment:

- Current economy and competition for scarce jobs;
- Accessing child care, especially for young parents;
- Training wage and informal economy pay too little;
- Cost of First Aid training and Criminal Record Checks;
- Age discrimination;
- International credentials not recognized.

Suggested solutions:

- Increased job opportunities for younger youth;
- More job skills training programs.

Public policy issues to explore:

- Affordable child care services;
- Improved, affordable services for recognition of foreign credentials;
- Implement a living wage policy for public and private employers;
- Eliminate the training wage;
- Increase the minimum wage;
- Wage subsidy.

Youth advocacy initiatives:

- Engage in policy conversations on employment/income security with all levels of government;
- Training for people to become self-advocates;
- Get trade union support.

Youth in Care

Key themes that emerged from this discussion group related to the importance of supports needed to keep families together, and the importance of strong connections to people who love and care for youth in care, either from family or non-biological families. Problems arise from inconsistent services from relevant government ministries, frequent placement changes, and lack of money for supervised visits that are needed to maintain family connections.

What keeps youth in care connected to families?:

- Agencies like the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks that creates family-like connections and provides programs through which youth can connect;
- Social workers who attempt to keep siblings together;
- Court orders that mandate maintaining contact with families;
- Peer support and encouragement to fight for right to keep family connections.

Barriers to maintaining connections with families:

- Social workers change often and caseloads are high;
- Social workers' ability and/or willingness to share information on family history with youth;
- "MCFD are not doing their job";
- Distance between home and foster placement;
- Siblings are separated because foster homes are not able to accommodate them together, and there is a subsequent lack of information on siblings' wellbeing;
- Instability and placement changes;
- Aging foster parent demographic;
- Youth do not know their rights, and supports are not in place for them to share what they are feeling and thus improve their situation;
- Need for early intervention, assessment and diagnosis to better understand and respond to the needs of the child.

Suggested solutions:

- Maintain contact with people they know and love;
- Increase support to social workers so they can consistently address the needs of youth in care;
- Provide opportunities for families to connect and heal;

- Make family history accessible to youth and other services providers;
- Keep youth in care networks active;
- Increase supports for youth who are transitioning out of care and connect them to appropriate community resources;
- Maintain and increase youth engagement coordinators and youth advisory councils;
- Ensure access to supports to increase developmental assets in youth;
- Need advocates who will support and advocate for concerns of youth in care.

Public policy issues to explore:

- Increase number of social workers in order to reduce caseloads and give more time to youth issues and concerns;
- Examine ways in which the present system can be more responsive to the needs of youth in care so that youth are not always the ones having to adjust to new systems;
- Lobby school system to be more aware of needs and challenges of youth in care and to respond in appropriate ways;
- Hold Ministry of Child and Family Development to their own standards and keep them accountable;
- Ensure long term sustainable funding for programs and services that address the needs of youth;
- Sustainable funding for services such as Family Finders, Roots, Kith/Kin, and Child in Home of a Relative. These MCFD funded services are inconsistently provided across the province.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Participants found the day to be very useful and informative. Comments were made to the effect that, although people came with their own key issues in mind, they had opportunities through the diversity of speakers and the discussion groups to increase their knowledge and understanding of other important topics and concerns. The pace of the day and excellent facilitation were commented on by a number of respondents.

The high participation of youth in all aspects of the forum was seen to be a strength and contributed much to the success of the panels and discussion groups; youth voice was evident in the summaries of each group. One participant stated: *“Loved how many youth were here – it’s actually quite a big achievement – congrats.”*

A number of specific suggestions were made for follow up on the issues and concerns raised in the discussions. Strong themes in the feedback were the importance of collaborative action, bringing the issues to the attention of government, and supporting more youth involvement and voice in advocacy (see *Appendix 4* for a summary of all evaluations). First Call is committed to incorporating the information received and connections made at the forum to build the strength of our coalition’s advocacy work on these crucial youth issues.

TAKING STOCK
OF YOUTH WELL BEING
IN BC TODAY: A FORUM




June 11, 2009
9:30 am – 2:00 pm
Vancouver Community College
Downtown Campus
250 Pender Street, Vancouver

Cost: \$35 per person
Youth will be sponsored
Refreshments & lunch provided

Registration is required
Please e-mail
info@firstcallbc.org
or call 604-873-8437.

The purpose of this forum is to bring together youth, and the agencies that work with youth, to 'take stock' of youth well being in BC.

In this **interactive session** we will hear from a range of **youth serving agencies** and **youth themselves**, as well as have opportunities to work on **identifying issues and developing policy recommendations.**

APPENDIX 2 – FORUM PROGRAM

Taking Stock of Youth Wellbeing in BC Today: A Forum

June 11, 2009
9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

9.00 Registration

9.30 Welcome and opening remarks from First Call, PeerNetBC, and Vancouver Foundation.

10.00 Where are we at?

An overview of recent research on youth in Vancouver and the province will be presented by Vancouver Foundation and McCreary Centre Society.

10.30 Break and refreshments

10.45 What's happening in our communities?

Our panel of service providers and youth will provide snapshots on current challenges and successes for youth from the **Aboriginal, immigrant and refugee, youth in care, LGBTQ, and disabilities** communities.

12.00 What can we achieve?

Youth facilitators will host discussion tables where we will take stock of the key issues, policy and service gaps to support the successful transition of youth to adulthood.

1.00 Lunch

1.30 What are our next steps?

We will summarize the work of the day and commit to ways that we can take action.



APPENDIX 3 – PARTICIPANT LIST

Amir, Mia	Surrey Urban Youth Project
Anderson, Lynell	Human Early Learning Partnership
Anderson, Alicia	Vancouver Foundation
Angel-Garau, Stephanie	Immigrant Services Society of BC
Bales, Stephanie	Pacific Community Resources Society
Basu, Jennifer	AMSSA
Batstone, Christina	First Call
Beale, Jean	BC Council for Families
Best, Sheila	Youth Services Policy Unit, MCFD
Bird, Leanne	Kitsilano Neighbourhood House
Bob, Colleen	Red Cross
Buchner, Chris	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
Buck, Kerry	Nakazdli Health Centre
Buitenhuis, Julianna	North Shore Crisis Services
Butler, Ally	Integrated Quality Assurance, MCFD
Canessa, Chantel	Children and Women's Hospital
Chamberlain, James	BC Teachers' Federation
Charlton, Heather	Vancouver Coastal Health
Charman, Rachel	Abbotsford Community Services
Chen, Emily	City of Vancouver YouthPolitik
Chiu, Vicki	Immigrant Integration Branch, ALMD
Chow, Becky	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
Clark, Wilma	Representative for Children and Youth
Clayton, Ryan	GAB Youth Services
Coburn, Trevor	Vancouver Youth Vision Coalition
Conway, Rosalie	YWCA One Stop Career Shop
Cook, Sarah	BC Children's Hospital - Youth Health Program
Dang, Steven	Social Policy, City of Vancouver
DeLong, Karen	BC Association for Community Living
Dewan, Tammie	BC Children's Hospital
Dixon, Kristina	Canadian Mental Health
Dorian-Hartle, Erin	Hollyburn Family Services
Findlater, Tanya	Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
Friesen, Chris	Immigrant Services Society of BC
Gendron, Wanda	Western Society for Children
Gifford, Mark	Vancouver Foundation
Gold, Rachel	PeerNetBC
Gossen, Nellie	Vancouver Foundation
Gotowiec, John	FASD Collaboration Roundtables, PCRS
Grant, Sherry	Nexus, Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Vancouver
Guerrero, JR	Surrey Urban Youth Project
Gurung, Smriti	City of Vancouver YouthPolitik
Haddon, Michelle	Regional Council Support Team, MCFD
Haines, Darren	Community Investment - Coast Capital Savings
Harper, Candice	Union Gospel Mission
Helland, Jocelyn	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
Henderson, Erin	Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland
Herbert, Spencer	MLA Vancouver West End
Hodgson, Kate	Network of Inner City Community Services

Hoffman, Jennie	Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
Hope, Glenn	BC Council for Families
Hume, Catherine	Vancouver Foundation
Hunter, Anna	PeerNetBC
Isaac, Kyle	Nakazdli Health Centre
Ivanova, Iglia	Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
Jawanda, Pavan	Ministry of Children and Family Development
Jedrzejowski, Helenka	Youth Addiction and Prevention Services, VCH
Jimenez, Lanny	Youth Outreach Team, City of Vancouver
Joe, Brian	Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association
Johnson, Chantalle	Abbotsford Community Services
Joseph, Jocelyn	Nakazdli Health Centre
Jules, Rebecca	Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association
Kerr, Beverly	Representative for Children and Youth
Khangura, Sonny	Progressive Intercultural Community Services
Kishor, Loreen	Pacific Community Resources Society
Kissel, Maggie	Muscular Dystrophy - Western Canada
Klassen, Adel	Pacific Community Resources Society
Knox, Vanessa	Capilano University - Continuing Education
Kopelow, Bryna	Action Schools! BC
Lamirand, Kellie	Xyolhemeylh Child and Family Services
Lee, Sara	Teen Services - Burnaby Public Library
Lee, Suln	City of Vancouver YouthPolitik
Levykh, Clark	Regional Youth Advisory Council, MCFD
Lum, Teresa	Representative for Children and Youth
Luk, Lydia	GAB Youth Services
Machado, Carmen	Abbotsford Community Services
Mahoney, Pat	Hudson Out of School Care
Mass, Ian	Pacific Community Resources Society
Matthews, Mary Lou	Child Health BC
McCarthy Flynn, Michael	First Call
McDaniels, Linda	Cowichan Intercultural Society
McFronton, Shanti	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
McGregor, Nicki	Youth Detox, Family Services of GV
Milowsky, Fred	Representative for Children and Youth
Mire, Hawa	Vancouver Foundation – Youth Vital Signs
Montani, Adrienne	First Call
Moran, Lynne	Capilano University - Continuing Education
Moss, Karen	BC Council for Families
Murgatroyd, Louise	no affiliation
Neufeld, Matt	Youth Services, Bowen Island Municipality
Nguyen, Vi	Vancouver Foundation
Niver, Jay	Alcohol-Drug Education Service
Norton, Julie	First Call
Olynyk, Ashley	Pacific Community Resources Society
Onatra, Pilar	BC Council for Families
Parnell, Nathan	Cowichan Intercultural Society
Penner, Nathan	Vancouver Foundation
Perry, Andrina	First Call
Persello, Darryl	Representative for Children and Youth
Pilgrim, Lorena	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks

Poitier, Sam	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
Porte, Christina P	Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
Preston, Bill	BC School Trustee's Association
Prieur, Allison	BC Recreation and Parks Association
Prince, Mark	Nakazdli Health Centre
Richardson, Lesley	First Call
Rivard, Caroline	Nakazdli Health Centre
Rivkin, Shelley	Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver
Rogan, Colleen	ELSA Net
Rowan, Maia	Vancouver Foundation
Sagalon, Nolan	Nakazdli Health Centre
Sam, Justine	Nakazdli Health Centre
Sam, Byron	Nakazdli Health Centre
Sam, Tyler	Nakazdli Health Centre
Schactman, Amy	Children of the Street Society
Schopman, Saskia	Pacific Community Resources Society
Scott, Lorine	Social Pediatric Initiative
Simpson, Shane	MLA Vancouver Hastings
Skourtes, Stephanie	PhD Candidate, Education, UBC
Snowdon, Kathy	Boys and Girls Club of Greater Vancouver
Specht, Breanne	Vancouver Coastal Health
Stewart, Duncan	McCreary Centre Society
Stooshnoff, Lianne	Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
Tait, Chris	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
Talbot, Sarena	PeerNetBC
Tam, Tina	Child Rights Consultant
Tan, Jenny	City of Vancouver YouthPolitik
Thom, Ryan	City of Vancouver YouthPolitik
Tu, Ricky	Vancouver Foundation
Van, Keith	Vancouver Foundation
Villalobos, Magnolia	Richmond Women's Resource Centre
Ward, Deirdre	Xyolhemeylh Child and Family Services
Watt, Kerrie	West Vancouver School District
Watts, Ken Watts	BC Assoc. of Aboriginal Friendship Ctrs and Aboriginal Youth Council
Whitehouse, Sandra	BC Children's Hospital - Youth Health Program
Whitely, Desiree	Nakazdli Health Centre
Wilmot, Robert	Broadway Youth Resource Centre
Winters, Lu	Jewish Community Centre
Wishart, Riley	City of Vancouver YouthPolitik
Wong, Ting Chia	City of Vancouver YouthPolitik
Wong, Denise	Hollyburn Family Services
Yousefi, Baharak	Vancouver Public Library, Teen Services
Zakaib, Jennifer	YWCA Vancouver

APPENDIX 4 - EVALUATIONS

Summary of Evaluations:

Participants were asked 4 questions in the evaluation form. Their responses are summarized below:

- 1) **What was your key issue when you arrived today?**
 - Youth voice/engagement
 - Poverty/homelessness/housing
 - Substance use/abuse
 - Discrimination
 - Child rights violations
 - Employment/training
 - Mental health - rural/northern youth
 - Safety
 - Disability issues
 - Info on Secure Care Initiative
 - Education
 - Recreation/physical activity
 - Aboriginal issues/concerns
 - Climate change
 - Immigrant & refugee issues

- 2) **What new issues did you learn more about today?** *(with number of responses)*
 - Aboriginal (2)
 - LGBTQ (1)
 - Immigrant/refugee (16)
 - Youth in care issues (20)
 - Systemic barriers (1)
 - Existing programs/resources (4)
 - Youth-friendly communities (1)
 - Service gaps (1)
 - Secure care (6)
 - Disabilities (3)
 - Housing (5)
 - Safety/bullying/health/sexual exploitation (4)
 - Poverty (1)
 - Substance use/abuse (2)

- 3) **What do you think the next steps should be?**
 - Continue with these forums annually
 - Send out report on Forum to all participants
 - Facilitate collaborative action
 - Bring forum information to government/advocacy groups
 - More youth discussion/voice (including marginalized groups)
 - Create website listing youth wanting to be engaged in policy/service design
 - Focus on solutions/new program development/prevention
 - Raise awareness of existing resources
 - Create a youth housing program in BC Housing
 - Advocate against secure care
 - Raise the minimum wage
 - Increase supports for youth outside of the Lower Mainland
 - Increase funding for mentorship programs
 - More focus on youth mental health
 - Improve supports for youth with disabilities/respect their rights
 - Improve education about discrimination in schools
 - More life skills training/education for youth
 - Civic youth engagement/youth-friendly cities movement

4) **Any other comments?**

- Loved how many youth were here (It's actually a big achievement. Congrats)
- Good pace – nice speaker mix
- Great work – the forum was insightful and engaging
- Great MC kept things on track/facilitator did a great job/facilitator was great – funny and engaging
- Awesome forum. It was great that young people were encourage to participate and voice their concerns
- Diverse panel – shared knowledge and personal insights
- I learned more about issues in the foster system and how to get involved
- Great overall learning
- Need for more awareness on children's rights
- Please include more specific issues around youth and mental health. It is throughout each area but it would be wonderful if it was addressed on it's own
- More focus on: What works/What could change/Solutions – ideas and actions
- I learned a lot today
- Needed a slightly longer day so we could have had more small group discussions. Very informative
- I am going to look into joining forces with PeerNetBC around youth with developmental disabilities
- Hold follow-up forums on specific issues (e.g. for youth on homo/transphobia in schools)
- Thank you First Call for your hard work and advocacy
- Issues need to be framed more positively. ..most issues and programs are spoken about as deficits not opportunities
- Maybe make it a whole day and build in more breaks so that personal connections can form