

# Cross-Canada Mapping of Youth-Led/Highly Youth Engaged Initiatives

## Research Component of the Project

### Online Survey

As part of the data collection process, TakingITGlobal conducted an online survey of Canadian organizations/groups utilizing an online form that was developed for the project. A survey consisting four parts was designed to elicit the optimal breath of information on the activities of Canadian youth-led/highly engaged groups with a special focus on organizational arrangements in the area of communication, networking and technology. The first part of the survey, *Your Organization/Group*, included questions related to the organizations' history, structure and the extent of youth involvement in their operations. The second part of the survey, *Your Networking/Collaboration/Communication Strategy*, focussed on the models of collaboration, mechanisms of communication and dissemination pathways employed by organizations in order to reach their objectives. The third part of the survey, *Assistance and Training*, asked organizations to identify the areas in which they require training and the types of learning that would enhance their activities. Finally, the last section of the survey, *Canada's Youth Community*, asked organizations to assess the extent of their current partnerships with other youth groups/organizations across Canada and to share their views on the creation of Canada-wide youth community (with on- and offline presence) which would allow to coordinate youth inputs in decision-making process. A total of 27 questions were included in the online survey. Questions included yes/no questions; multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. For a comprehensive list of survey questions, see Appendix B.

The survey was sent out to approximately 500 Canadian organizations registered in organization database on the Canada Country Site (<http://canada.takingitglobal.org>). The survey was accompanied by an email explaining the project and inviting the participation of each institution. Following the consultation with the McConnell Foundation, it was decided that the age criteria in defining youth will be kept as inclusive as possible. For the purpose of the survey, we adopted the definition of youth as persons under the age of 30.

The survey was sent out on December 10, 2005 and organizations were asked to submit it not later than December 24, 2005. The Project Coordinator responded to questions from several organizations that experienced technical or logistical difficulties related to the participation in the online survey.

A total of 37 surveys were received by TakingITGlobal. A relatively low response rate (under 10%) was largely attributed to the short time given for the completion of the survey. However, the survey data comprise only part of the overall data collection strategy for the project. The findings of the online survey allowed us to develop in-depth interview protocol for the next step in the project - in-person interviews with representatives of diverse youth groups and organizations in 10 cities across Canada.

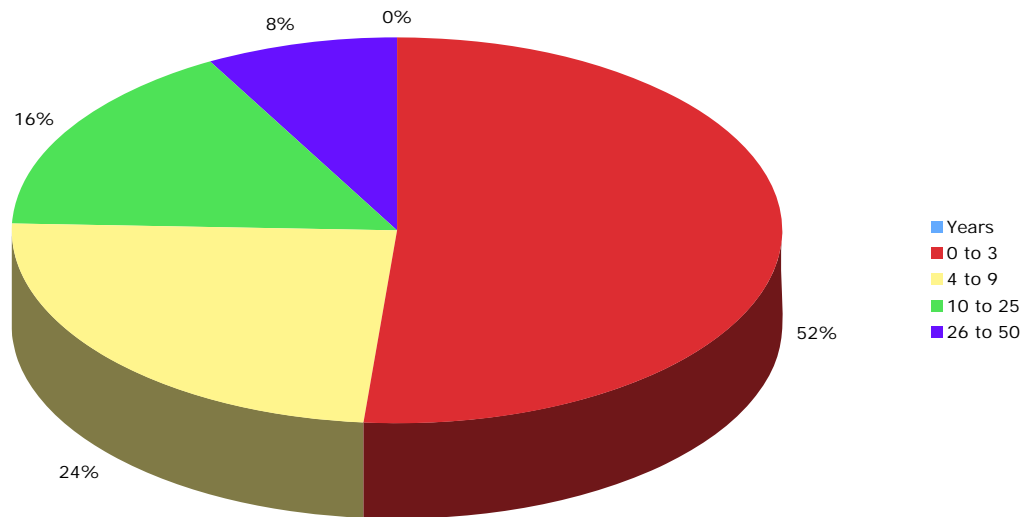
### In-Depth Interviews

The second phase of data collection involves interviews conducted by the Project Coordinator with approximately 60 organizations across Canada. The list of organizations to be interviewed is available in Appendix C. Interview questions are detailed in Appendix D. The interviews will be conducted in person. In addition, several interviews will be conducted over the phone to ensure that the voices and perspectives of youth organizations/groups located outside of major urban centers of Canada are reflected in the study.

Face-to-face interviews will be conducted during the period January 4 to February 28, 2006. Interview length will be approximately one hour. During the interviews, the Project Coordinator will ask questions according to the interview protocol and take notes. All interviews will be audiotaped. Immediately after the interview, responses will be transcribed into word processed format.

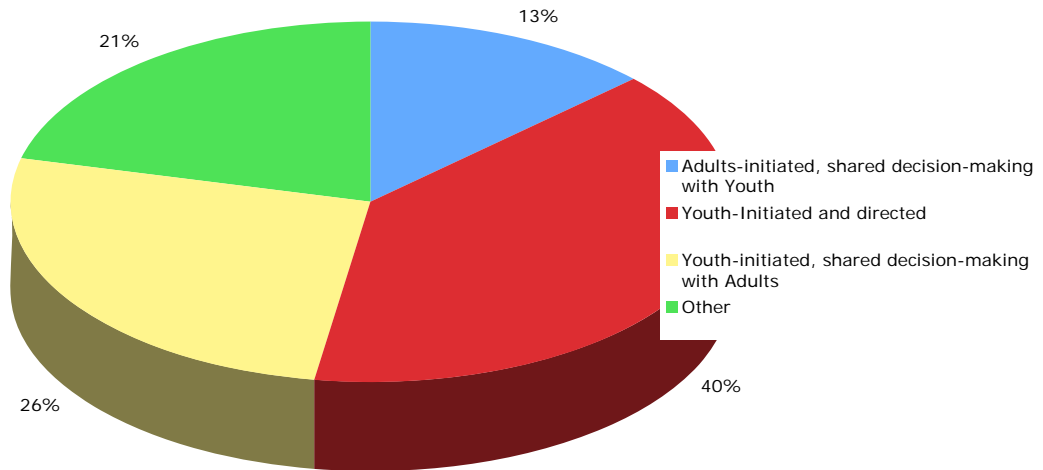
### Summary of online survey data

How long has your organization been established?



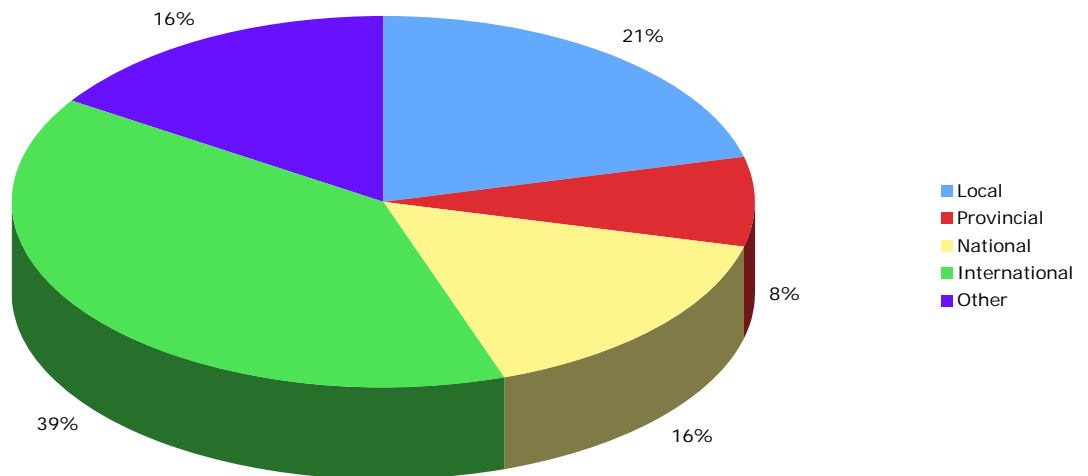
Overall, the organizations and groups who took part in the survey are relatively young. 52% of the organizations have been established within the past 3 years, 24% within the past 4-9 years.

4 - Please describe your organizations/groups structure

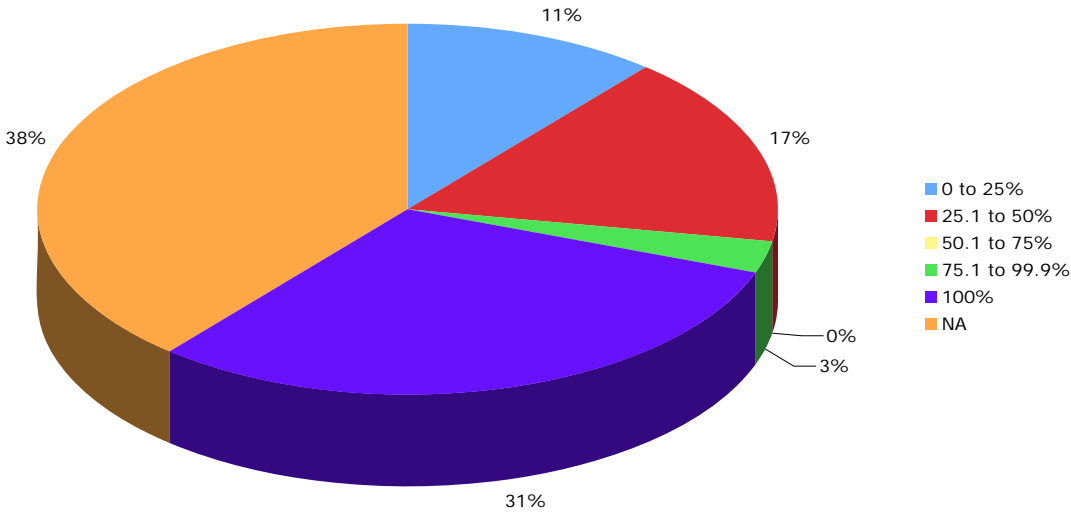


40% of the organizations are youth-initiated and directed.

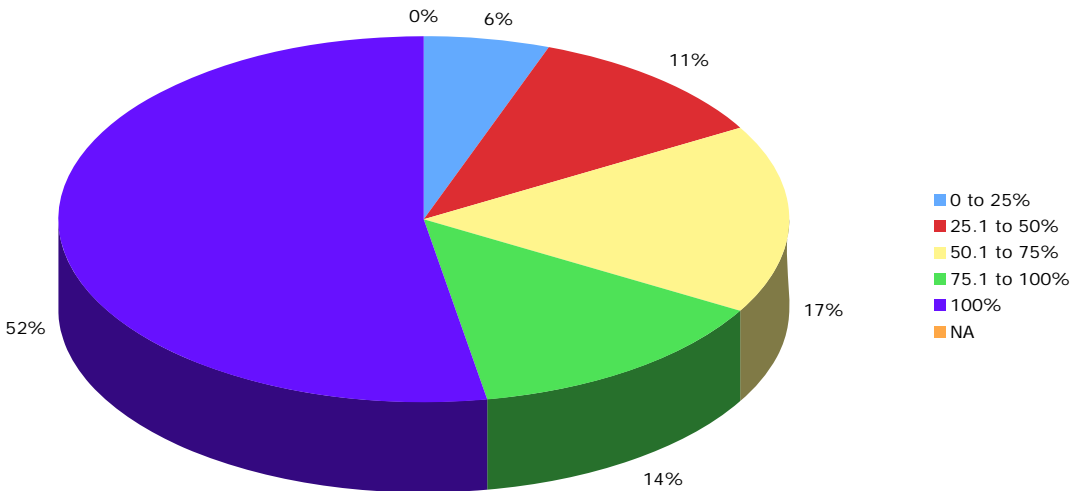
5 - Please describe your organizational reach



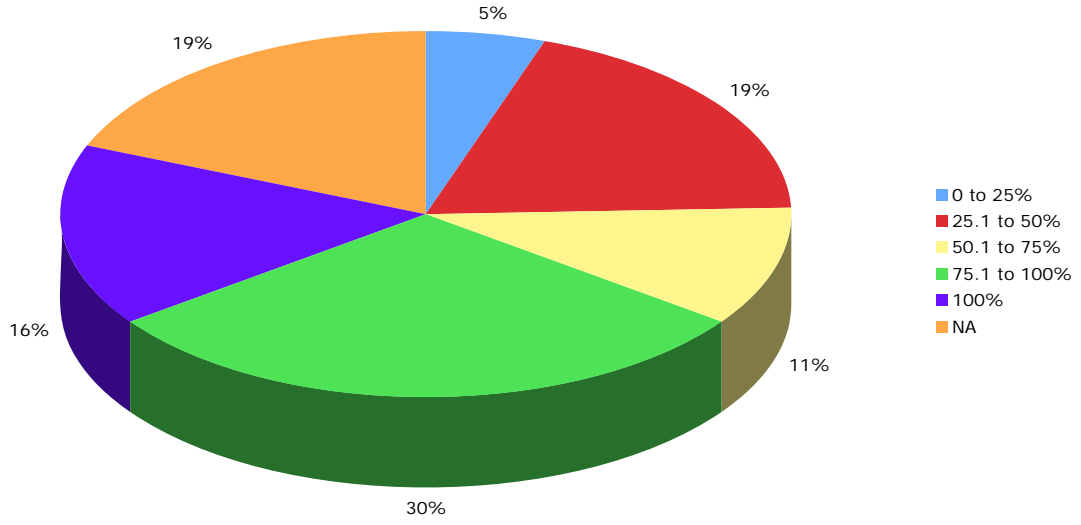
Youth as a percentage of workforce



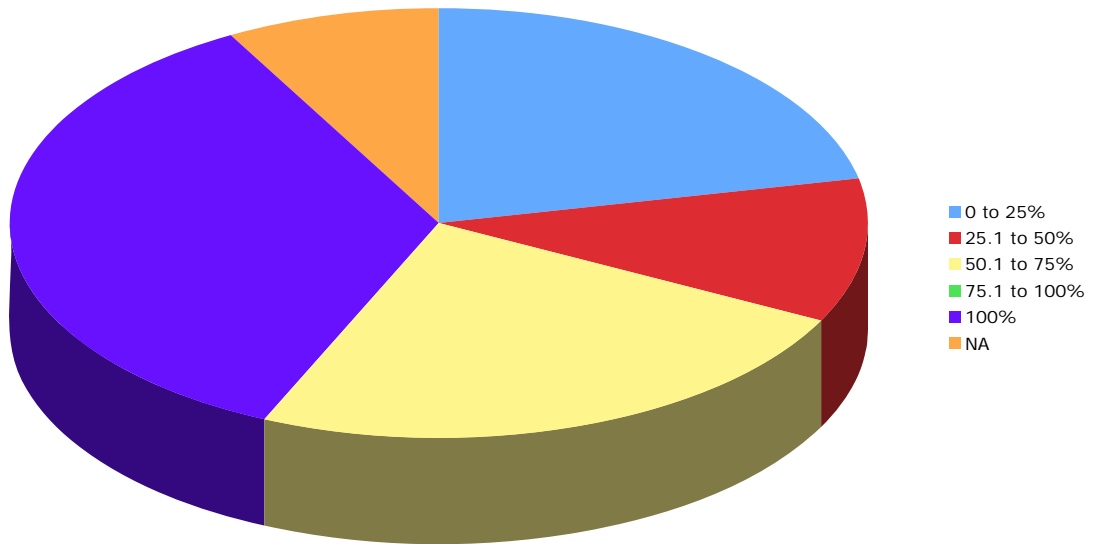
Youth as a percentage of volunteers



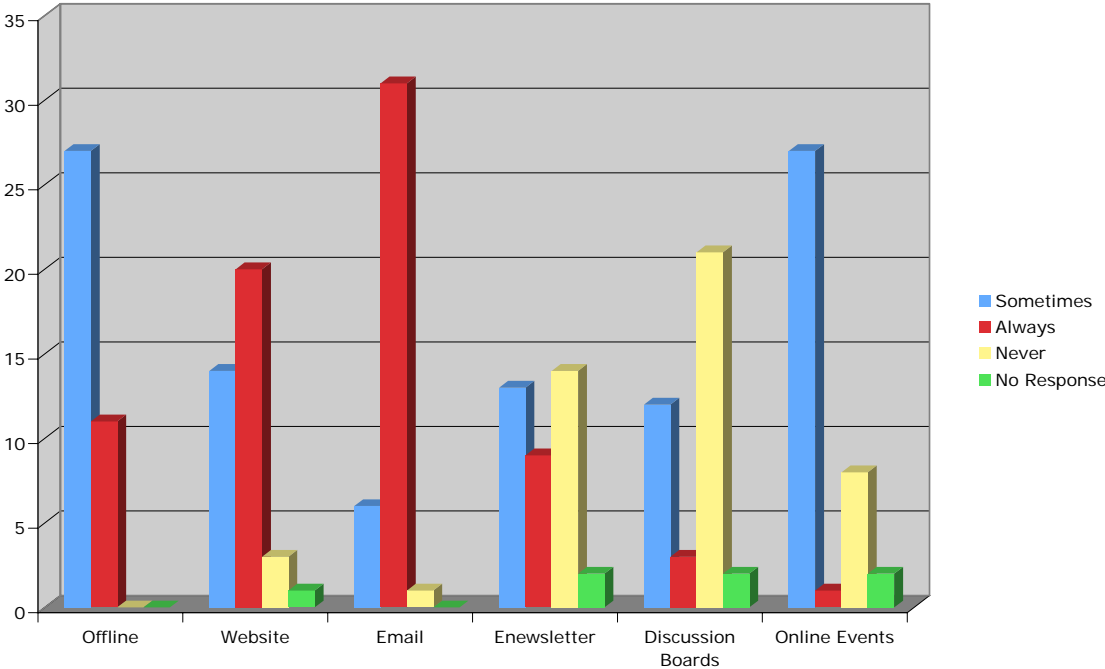
**Youth as a percentage of network size**



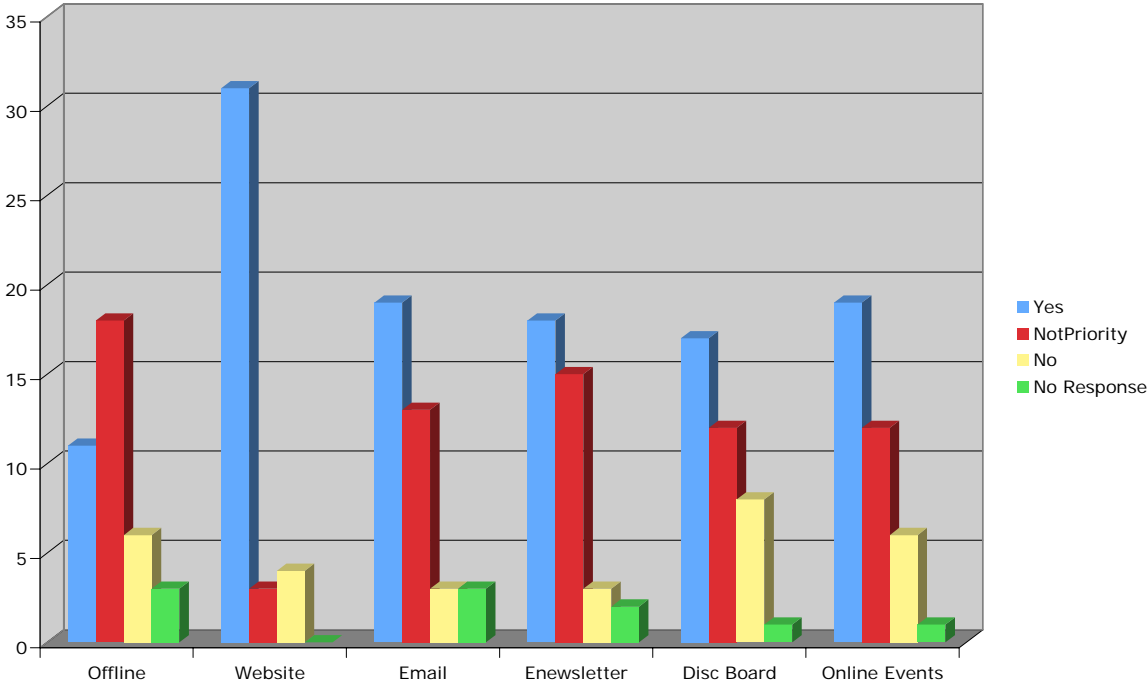
**Youth as a percentage of advisors**



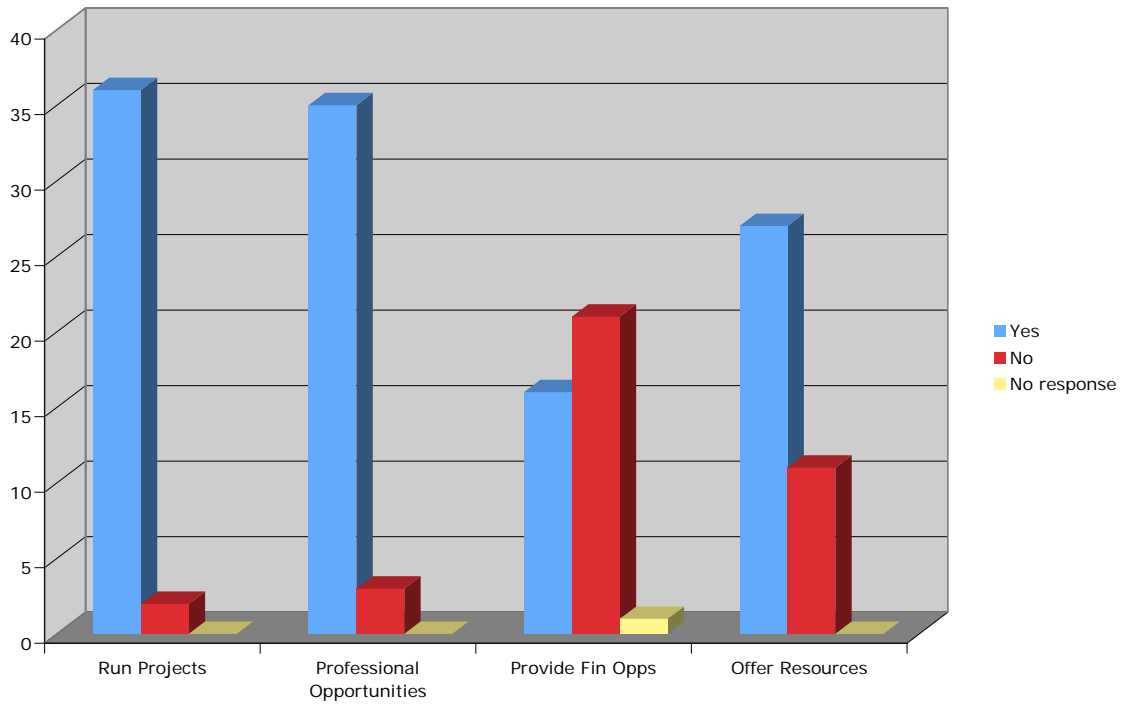
**What tools does your organization/group use for communication within your network?**



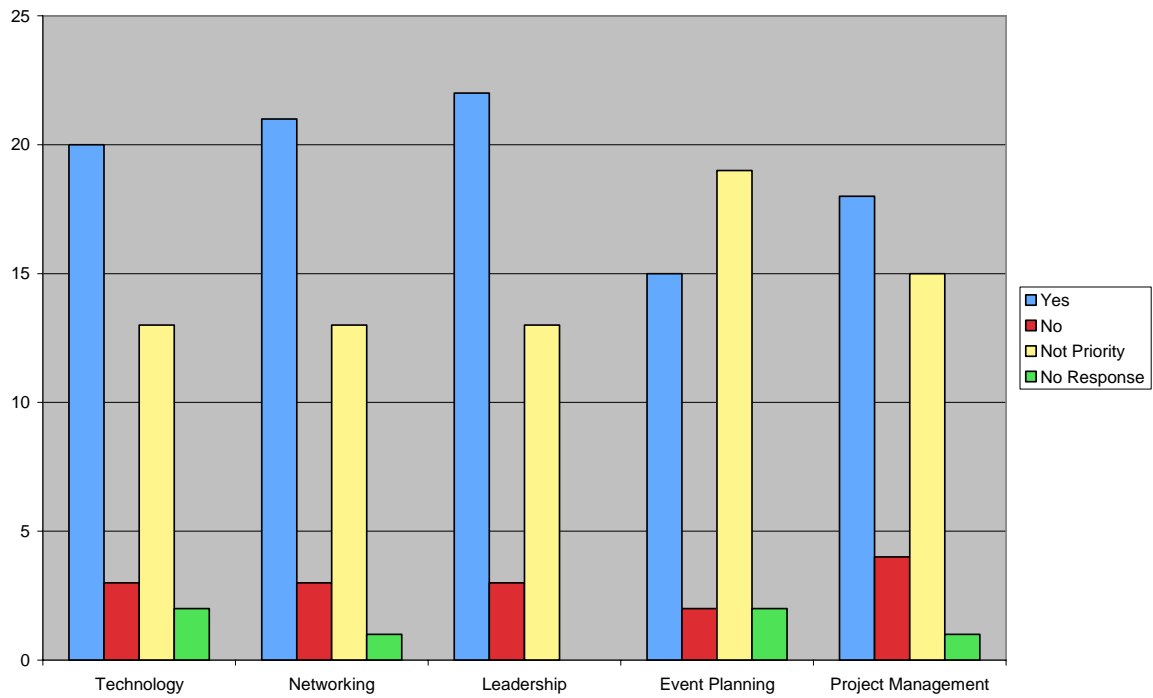
**What tools would your organization/group want to advance or enhance communication within your network?**



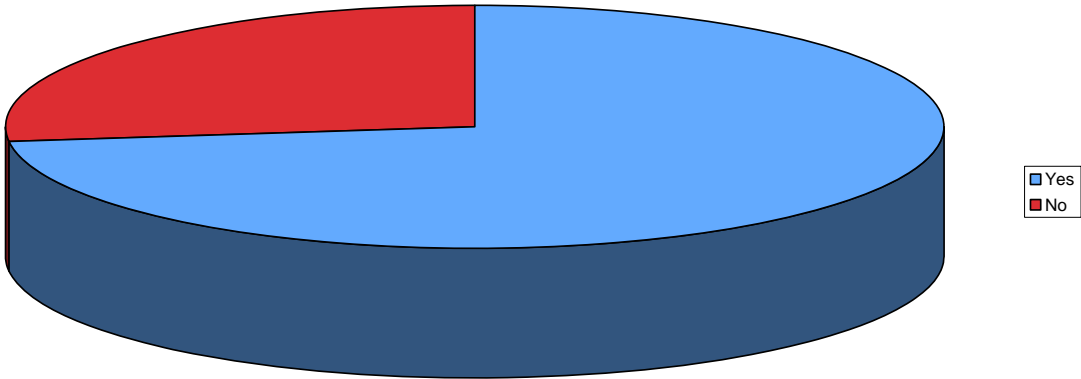
**Does your organization/group**



**Interest in Capacity-Building Wrokshops**



Do you network/collaborate with other Canadian groups?



**19. Do you network/collaborate/partner with other Canadian youth groups/organizations?**

27 organizations answered 'yes' while 10 answered 'no'. Among those who answered 'yes', only few collaborate with other youth organizations/groups on informal or occasional basis while the majority incorporate various formal partnerships to achieve their goals. The survey shows that partnerships between educational institutions and youth organizations/groups are rather popular. Several organizations established partnerships with local universities and schools to engage youth in their activities. One organization hosts an annual networking breakfast which brings together over a hundred of organizations to discuss future collaborations. Most organizations establish partnerships around specific projects and hosting of events.

All organizations stated that they would be interested in collaborating with other groups.

## 20. What are the three main challenges facing your organization/group?

The majority of the organizations/groups commented on the lack of stable core funding as their main challenge. Among other challenges were shortage of staff/volunteers and lack of staff training opportunities.

Interestingly, there is an increasing recognition among youth organizations/groups as to the importance of effective use of the information and communication technology for the purposes of outreach, promotion and ongoing communication with engaged youth. Specifically, respondents identified the following needs in this area:

- keeping in contact with engaged youth
- access to affordable IT expertise
- training on new technology
- communicating the work of the organization through ICTs

Many organizations stated that their ability to reach new youth and to keep youth involved and active could be significantly enhanced with the help of new technologies. The following statement by one of the respondents illustrates this point:

*“It is important for our group to improve our ability to advertise our events to more people using the internet. This is because the internet is much cheaper, faster, and more convenient than other methods.”*

Preliminary findings suggest that the lack of sustainable funding means that Canadian youth organizations/groups need to look for cost-effective and efficient ways to reach youth and to promote their work. Most organizations view new technologies, especially the internet, as an important way to enhance their work and to reach new audiences. However, most organizations lack technological capacity and knowledge needed to incorporate technology into their activities.

## 21. What are the three main assets that your organization/group possesses?

According to the survey, virtually all organizations/groups view youth who play different roles within their organizations as their main asset. Among the categories of youth identified by respondents are: youth members/alumni and youth staff/volunteers.

Many organizations commented on the skills and qualities that youth are bringing to their work, including dedication, enthusiasm, fresh ideas and new perspectives on various issues.

**22. Would your organization/group be interested in participating in the following capacity-building workshops?**

The findings of the survey indicate that most youth organizations/groups are interested in developing their capacities in the areas of leadership, networking/collaboration and technology/communication:

Leadership - 58%  
Networking/collaboration - 55%  
Technology/communication - 53%  
Project management - 47%  
Event planning - 39%

**23. Please list Canadian youth events and/or conferences that your organization/group has participated in.**

The survey showed that there is a great deal of diversity in terms of the extent of participation of Canadian youth organizations/groups in youth events and conferences at the local, provincial, national and international levels. National events in which participating organizations took part include: Youth Consultation held in Ottawa, Youth Said It! organized by the CACL and conferences organized by the Students Commission. Provincial events that were attended by several organizations include: Ontario Young People's Alliance conferences and New Brunswick Youth Action Conference. In addition, several organizations participated in local and international events with a youth focus.

While some organizations are actively involved in events and conferences on a regular basis, others have limited presence at youth forums and events. This suggests that some youth organizations/groups, especially those that are smaller and younger, might experience challenges in the areas of collaboration, networking and knowledge sharing due to the limited visibility and lack of knowledge of the broader trends and emerging best practices in the youth sector in Canada.

**24. Are you interested in participating in events/conferences that focus on Canadian youth?**

All organizations/groups surveyed stated that they would be interested in participating in events/conferences which focus on Canadian youth. The following statement by one organization captures a strong interest in these types of event:

*"Our group is firmly committed to strengthening relations with other youth groups and government officials in an effort to motivate youth on the board and throughout the province."*

**25. Would you identify your organization/group as one that strives to influence or influences decision making processes? Please describe.**

The organizations that participated in the online survey are involved in three types of activities involving youth: awareness-raising, education and decision-making. Several organizations are involved in a combination of these activities. Among those who are involved in activities related to decision making, specific areas of involvement include:

- youth participation in policy development;
- development of youth decision making strategies for a specific regions;
- youth involvement in committee work and advisory boards;
- lobbying provincial and federal governments;
- connecting youth with decision-makers.

**26. What is your opinion regarding the development of a website that promotes information sharing among Canadian youth initiatives? Please describe.**

All organizations/groups, except one, were very enthusiastic about the idea of developing Canada-wide portal which would connect youth organizations/groups across Canada, promote collaboration, networking, and knowledge sharing. The following quotes represent the strong support that youth organizations/groups, established and new ones alike, expressed regarding such initiative:

*"We are very excited for this idea, and feel that it would greatly benefit youth grassroots organizing and networking opportunities."*

*"Our organization would strongly support that and believe it is an excellent step toward exchanging ideas and information that will be put forward to encourage youth engagement."*

*"Sounds like a good idea. From what I could tell, it would require significant consultation / feedback from potential users to make a user friendly interface. Identifying ways to ensure quality of content and establishing relevant topics for information sharing would be challenging, but rewarding."*

*"We think this is great - as long as useful connections and examples of relevant best practices can be found amid all of the information. Sometimes it can be frustrating knowing that the information/model/potential-partnership is definitely out there, but how to efficiently identify and connect with it?"*

*"In the initial years, it seemed that we were working in isolation. Now there are so many youth groups that are youth led and we would like to connect with them. A website would allow that to happen more easily."*

Several important recommendations were suggested by youth organizations/groups regarding the development of a Canada-wide youth portal. These are summarized below:

- It is necessary to gain input from potential users through consultations with youth;
- Promotion of the website to individual youth and youth groups across Canada should take place on a regular basis;
- It is important to ensure the quality of the content;
- The website should include components that focus on experiences, resources and networking opportunities;
- It is important to ensure that the website stays on target and is easy to use;
- The website should include information of use to new youth groups, such as how to write funding proposals, how to start a youth organization, what are the legal issues that youth need to be aware of.

**27. What is your opinion on developing a national youth body to reflect the opinions of Canada's youth population and to coordinate a youth voice in decision making processes? Please describe.**

The majority of respondents saw many benefits in having a Canadian national youth body. The following responses summarize the benefits of having a national youth body identified by respondents:

*"Establishing a credible and active youth body is definitely needed to broaden Canada's youth voices and role models and unite Canadian youth."*

*"It's about time and long overdue. There are many youth groups and youth initiatives happening all over the country. The process has begun."*

*"This would be a very worthwhile endeavour that would allow youth to have a meaningful say in decision making and encourage and support youth leadership."*

Several participants were generally supportive of the idea of a national youth body but pointed to a number of factors that should be considered. Among the main concerns identified by respondents are:

- Issues surrounding youth voice and representation

Several respondents pointed to the fact that in a large-scale initiatives representing youth, the voices of many young people remain excluded. According to one respondent,

*"I would be weary about whose voices get heard, and whose doesn't. It is always a challenge to have a few represent the voice of so many."*

Another respondent pointed that diversity should be central to a national youth body:

*"It must have a strong focus that looks at youth issues not only with respect to age but also with respect to other identities (e.g., gender, race, sexuality, etc.)"*

Two respondents felt that oftentimes large-scale youth initiatives in Canada centered on "urban kids from Central Canada" and therefore exclude many youth. One respondent sums up:

*"The term national always favours Toronto and sometimes the East Coast. Prairie, DC and Northern regions need to be well and over represented as they have been well under represented in the past."*

To sum up, respondents felt that diversity should be integral part when it comes to the composition of the national youth body and the approaches to the issues which concern youth. Equally important, the balance between the urban and rural youth should be taken into account while developing Canada-wide youth body.

- Challenges related to coordination and sustainability

*"This sounds like a worthwhile endeavour, but to my thinking would take significant long term commitment. It would require effective partnerships at a number of levels of society (for example, civil society, academic, policy makers)."*

- Issues surrounding relevance and impact

Several respondents cautioned about the danger of a national youth body turning into a bureaucratic machine and losing touch with the youth it serves to represent. One respondent was sceptical about the idea:

*"I think that, in theory, this is a good idea. However, I can see this get bogged down in stale ideas and too much talk."*

Some noted that for a national youth body to be truly effective, a significant amount of commitment and time would be needed. Several respondents stated that there is a danger that a national youth body will not be taken seriously by decision-makers.

Several respondents stated that there is no need in developing a national youth body. Two respondents pointed that there are already analogues umbrella organizations that fit this role (such as Canada25, YEN). One respondent stated that it would make more sense to have an association of youth-focused organizations.

## APPENDIX A

### ORGANIZATIONS/GROUPS SURVEYED

Canadian Commission for UNESCO  
Journalists for Human Rights  
The Otesha Project  
Regional Multicultural Youth Centre  
Canada 25  
Tempus International  
Global Connections Unlimited  
Woman Aid Society  
Tiny Giant Magazine  
Toronto Raver Info Project  
Wildfire Dance Theatre  
McGill HIV/AIDS Interdisciplinary Network (OMHIN)  
Working to Empower  
Youth Challenge International  
Hart House Social Justice Committee  
Ending Violence Against Women  
FEM International  
Respect in Action  
Manitoba Council for International Cooperation  
Party for a Cause  
Swami Sai Premananda  
Home School Youth Group  
Shawville & District Recreation Association  
Resource Opportunities Centre  
United Nations Association in Canada - Healthy Children, Healthy Communities  
Youth Granting Youth-The Muttart Foundation  
Just a Minute of Peace  
Candomania  
Ophelia's Voice  
University of Waterloo International Health Development Association  
Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line  
World Relief Canada  
Global Forum on International Cooperation  
Sierra Youth Coalition-Sierra Club of Canada  
Sports for Social Change  
Back of the Moon

## APPENDIX B

### ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

#### Your Organization/Group

1. Please describe how your organization/group is youth-led or highly youth engaged:
2. Would you identify your organization/group as Canadian?
  - Yes No
3. When was your organization/group established?
4. Please describe your organizations/groups structure:
  - Adult-initiated, shared decision-making with youth
  - Youth-initiated and directed
  - Youth-initiated, shared decision-making with adults
  - Other, please describe:
5. Please describe your organizational reach:
  - Local
  - National
  - International
  - Other, please describe:
6. How many paid employees do you have?
7. How many of them are youths?
8. How many volunteers do you have?
9. How many of them are youths?
10. Approximately, how many people are in your network?
11. How many of them are youths?
12. How many people do you have on your board or in advisory roles?
13. How many of them are youths?

#### Your Networking/Collaboration/Communication Strategy

What tools does your organization/group use for communication within your network?

14. Offline Communication Mediums
  - Always Sometimes Never
15. Online Communication Mediums
  - a) Website
    - Always Sometimes Never

- b) E-mail  
Always Sometimes Never
- c) E-newsletter  
Always Sometimes Never
- d) Discussion Boards  
Always Sometimes Never
- e) Online Events (e.g. video conferences, consultations, etc.)  
Always Sometimes Never
- f) Other, please specify:

What tools would your organization/group want to advance to enhance communication within your network?

16. Offline Communication Mediums

Yes Yes, but not a priority No

17. Online Communication Mediums

- a) Website  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No
- b) E-mail  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No
- c) E-newsletter  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No
- d) Discussion Boards  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No
- e) Online Events (e.g. video conferences, consultations, etc.)  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No
- f) Other, please specify:

18. Does your organization/group:

- a) Host events?  
Yes No
- b) Run projects?  
Yes No
- c) Have professional/volunteer opportunities?  
Yes No
- d) Provide financial opportunities?  
Yes No
- e) Have available resources? (e.g. toolkits, publications, guides, etc.)  
Yes No

19. Do you network/collaborate/partner with other Canadian youth organizations/groups?

Yes -- Please describe how:

No -- Would you want to?

### Assistance & Training

20. What are the three main challenges facing your organization/group?

21. What are the three main assets that your organization/group possess?

22. Would your organization/group be interested in participating in any of the following capacity-building workshops?

a) Technology/Communication  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No

b) Networking/Collaboration  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No

c) Leadership  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No

d) Event Planning  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No

e) Project Management  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No

f) Fundraising  
Yes Yes, but not a priority No

g) Other, please specify:

### Canada's Youth Community

23. Please list Canadian youth events and/or conferences that your organization/group has participated in.

24. Are you interested in participating in events and/or conferences that focus on Canadian youth?

26. Would you identify your organization/group as one that strives to influence or influences decision making processes? Please describe.

27. What is your opinion regarding the development of a website that promotes information sharing among Canadian youth initiatives? Please describe.

28. What is your opinion on developing a national youth body to reflect the opinions of Canada's youth population and to coordinate a youth voice in decision making processes? Please describe.

## APPENDIX C

### ORGANIZATIONS/GROUPS TO BE INTERVIEWED

Red Wire Native Youth Development  
KAYA  
Environmental Youth Alliance  
International Institute for Child Rights and Development  
City of Vancouver Youth Outreach Team  
Get Your Vote On  
Rural Youth  
Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks  
The City of Victoria Youth Council  
Youth Global Liason, Centre for Global Studies  
City of Vancouver Youth Outreach Team  
Sierra Youth Coalition  
Eonfire  
Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks  
Youth Participation Strategy Covenant House Vancouver  
IICRD  
Environmental Youth Alliance  
Youth Coalition  
Bashaw Youth Foundation  
University of Alberta  
Aboriginal Youth Network  
First Nations Youth Service Learning Program  
Pride Centre of Edmonton  
Youth of Alberta Community Foundation  
AIESEC Edmonton  
Youth Launch-Nutana Collegiate  
Association jeunesse fransaskoise  
Canadian Mennonite University  
Sexuality and Reproductive Health Facilitator Sexuality Education Resource Centre  
Youth Environmental Network  
Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa  
United Nations Association in Canada  
Sierra Club of Canada-Sierra Youth Club  
National Youth in Care Network  
Youth Canada Association  
Youth Net/ Reseau Ado  
National Association of Friendship Centres  
Conference regionale des elus de la Capitale-Nationale  
Saint John Youth Cabinet, Human Development Council  
Saint John Teen Resource Centre  
UNB Multimedia Society President  
Aids Committee of Toronto  
Daystrom Foundation  
Arts Network for Children and Youth

Free The Children  
Street Kids International  
Framework Foundation  
Meal Exchange  
Fédération Étudiante Universitaire du Quebec  
Power Camp National  
Santropol Roulant Inc.  
Bureau de consultation jeunesse  
Club 2/3  
Apathy is Boring  
Leave Out Violence  
Santropol Roulant  
University of the Streets Café-Institute of the Streets Café-Concordia University  
Forum jeunesse de l'île de Montréal  
The Global Classroom Initiative  
Centre for Community Youth Development  
Homeschool Youth Group  
Sackville Public Library, Halifax Public Libraries  
Meal Exchange-Dalhousie University

## APPENDIX D

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### PART I

##### Your Organization/Group

1. Please describe how your organization/group is youth-led or highly youth engaged:
2. When and how was your organization/group established?
3. Please describe your organizations/groups structure:
  - Adult-initiated, shared decision-making with youth
  - Youth-initiated and directed
  - Youth-initiated, shared decision-making with adults
  - Other, please describe:
4. Please describe your organizational reach:
  - Geographically: Local/National/International/Other, please describe
  - Demographically:
5. What are the key issues that your organization/group is addressing?
6. Can you provide examples of past, current or upcoming projects that illustrate how you address these issues?
7. How do you assess the impact of your work? (success)
8. What role does technology play in the implementation of your programs? To what extent do you rely on the Internet to reach your target audience?

#### PART II

##### Guiding Document/Statement (website)

9. Does your organization/group have a communication and website strategy? (how, method, document)
10. If yes, when was it developed and what are the key components? (obtain the URL and relevant documents)

##### Management of Communications & Website

11. Do you have a staff person who is responsible for communications in your organization's/group? Does your organization/group have in-house communication coordinator, web developers or designers? (PR, communication)
12. Does your organization/group send out information about your current and upcoming projects, initiatives and opportunities? If yes, what kind of communication mechanisms do you use (web site, e-mail, print materials, web-based and print newsletters). (How does your organization/group promote events and projects that you organize or co-organize? Give an example of the how.)
13. Is your web site intended to cover local, regional or global information?
14. Is your web site dynamic/static?

## Resources & Opportunities for Youth

15. What kinds of resources for youth does your organization/group have? (guides, toolkits, publications).
16. Does your organization/group run projects and hosts events?
17. Does your organization/group provide professional/ financial opportunities?

## Technology & Communication Needs

18. What would your group/organisation be interested in learning to strengthen your technological/ communication needs? [**yes, maybe, no**]
  - a. best practices in online community management;
  - b. reaching new audiences; (banner site)
  - c. running youth online consultations and issue-based chats;
  - d. promoting your events, projects and opportunities;
  - e. creating engaging e-newsletters;
  - f. managing projects online;
  - g. finding international partners.
19. What is the most urgent?

## Networking, collaboration & information sharing

20. Has your organization/group participated in Canadian youth events and conferences held at the local, provincial or national levels? Please give examples and describe your involvement.
21. Are you interested in participating in events and/or conferences that focus on Canadian youth? Please give examples of issues/thematic areas that you want to discuss at these events.
22. Are you aware of other youth org-s/groups in Canada working on similar issues?
23. Do you collaborate with youth org-s/groups in your area?
24. Is your organization is well-informed about the best practices undertaken by other youth groups in Canada? (relate to their org, project/events)
25. Do you think that Canadian youth groups are well connected? Is there good information sharing and knowledge exchange? (Facilities, venues)

## Suggestions for Online Tools on Canada-wide youth portal

26. Do you think Canadian youth groups/org-s will benefit from the development of a national youth portal with up-to-date information and updated content on new projects, events and opportunities for Canadian youth?
27. What kinds of tools and functionalities available to organizations on the Canada-wide youth portal would you like to see being developed?