



NAFC Indigenous
Youth Council
l'ANCA Conseil des
jeunes autochtones

32nd Annual Youth Forum Report

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Introduction

The 32nd Annual National Youth Forum on Reconcili-ACTION, took place in-person on July 22-23, 2022, in Victoria, BC. The event was a success as participants from across Turtle Island came together to reconnect after two years apart, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A special thank you to all of those in attendance including Senators, speakers, youth, members, observers, the Indigenous Youth Council (IYC) and National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) staff. With a sincere appreciation to all who generously sponsored the event and donated to the youth auction.

The NAFC Youth Council acknowledges and respects the Lekwungen (lək' wəŋən) peoples on whose traditional territory the Youth Forum takes place and to the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, for their hospitality.

Demographic

Audience	Target	Actual
Youth Delegates	75	37
Observers		54
Staff (including BoD & Senate)		25
Chaperones & Elders		16
Artisan/Vendor		4
TOTAL		136

Day One Overview

Opening Ceremonies

On the first day of the Youth Forum, Emcee, Talon Fire Bird, welcomed everyone to the event with positive energy and kind words as he called upon Elder Shirley Alphonse, of the Cowichan Nation, to offer an opening prayer and well wishes for a good gathering. Following the opening prayer, NAFC President, Kelly Benning, acknowledged the members of the NAFC Senate, Indigenous Youth Council, and all in attendance, with special thanks to NAFC staff for their hard work on pulling the event together. NAFC Executive Director, Jocelyn Formsmas, acknowledged the traditional territory and noted that the forum is meant to ensure youth voices are heard, to create space, and share ideas. Following the opening ceremonies, the IYC President, Desarae

Bilinski and NAFC Youth Coordinator, Leah Prisque reviewed the agenda, introduced the Urban Indigenous Youth Leadership Project, and went over the youth report from the previous year.

“The Friendship Centre Movement (FCM) is a beautiful thing from coast-to-coast-to-coast, it raises leaders and creates a bright future for Indigenous youth. Your solutions are needed, so step into the circle and find your way” – NAFC President, Kelly Benning

Due to Covid-19, youth engagement opportunities and in-person events were limited as NAFC took precautions that were in line with Health Canada guidelines. However, highlights from the report included:

- The NAFC’s participation in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues which held key discussions around Indigenous peoples, business, autonomy, and the human rights principles of due diligence including free, prior, and informed consent
- The rebranding of the Aboriginal Youth Council (AYC) that was renamed to the NAFC Indigenous Youth Council (IYC) accompanied by the redesign of the IYC logo.

The logo tells the story of diversity amongst Indigenous youth, the cityscape representing urban life, and the trees to represent our connection to nature and culture that still finds a way in urban centers.



Day One Presentations

Keynote Speaker: Jody Wilson-Raybould

To kick off the event, Jody Wilson-Raybould (JWR), a member of the We Wai Kai Nation, participated in a one-on-one with the IYC President, Desarae Bilinski with an empowering, funny, and meaningful Q&A that left many feeling like their voices were heard. Jody was the Independent MP for Vancouver Granville, The Federal Minister of Justice, Attorney General and Minister of Veterans Affairs in the Government of Liberal PM Justin Trudeau. As Canada's first Indigenous Justice Minister, she introduced ground-breaking legislation, including Bill C-16 on gender identity and human rights. She has helped to build bridges between First Nations communities and the Canadian Government and is committed to helping Indigenous peoples seek self-government and gain equality in education, healthcare, and legal rights.

Speaker: Larissa Crawford

Following the meet n’ greet and book signing with JWR, Larissa Crawford took the stage to guide us through her presentation on Honouring Self, Community, and Earth Through the Reimagination of ‘Success.’ As a restorative circle keeper, published Indigenous and anti-racism researcher, award-winning ribbon skirt artist, and proudly passes on Métis and Jamaican ancestry to her daughter, Zyra. She is the Founder of Future Ancestors Services, a youth-led professional services social enterprise that advances equity and climate justice through lenses of ancestral accountability and anti-racism.

Quebec Youth Report: Cape Scott Provincial Park Expedition

This heartfelt presentation involved a recollection of shared experiences from the Quebec Youth delegation who participated in a leadership expedition consisting of a 55km hike through the Pacific Rainforest to Cape Scott (Vancouver Island). The program was intended to be a language and cultural exchange as well as an opportunity to gain self-sufficiency and understanding of self as Indigenous youth.

World Café Activity

The World Café activity offered youth the opportunity to share their ideas and provide feedback on topics such as:

- How can NAFC engage more youth?
- What type of research or training opportunities would you like to see at local, provincial, or National levels?
- How can we empower youth across the FCM?

Answers to these questions can be found in the accompanying document ‘World Café.’

Culture Night at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC)

To conclude the first day of the Youth Forum, the VNFC hosted a culture night that was sure to leave a lasting impression as Indian Tacos were served alongside performances by the Wildflowers and Swil Kanim, who undoubtedly inspired and captivated audience members.

Day Two Overview

Opening Ceremonies

Talon Fire Bird opened the stage with well wishes and a review of day one. He called upon Elder Shirley Alphonse to begin the day in a good way with an opening prayer.

“The land is us and we are the land” – Elder Shirley Alphonse

Day Two Presentations

Speaker: T’ancháy Redvers (they/them)

T’ancháy Redvers kicked off day two with a powerful presentation on Breaking Cycles and Creating Ripples of Change in Communities. They captivated the audience with their personal story and provided the youth with best practices and tools to help manage their own wellbeing. Best practices and tools to manage wellbeing included:

1. Ok not to be ok
2. Healing is not linear
3. Love and joy is traditional
4. We deserve to stand firm in our boundaries

5. You are not your mental illness/hardships/insecurities – you are much more
6. We are not responsible for the pain that others carry
7. Do not be hard on each other; be hard on the systems (lateral love, not violence)
8. Even when you feel alone, the land proves otherwise
9. We need tender warriors – healers, the soft-spoken ones, the storytellers – give more hugs and say, “I love you”.
10. Change is slow and steady

“Embody respect, humility, love, wisdom, courage, truth, and honesty. Be a seed planter in your community – it will grow for someone. You are as strong as the ones who walked before you” –

T’áncháy Redvers

Speaker: Kairyn Potts, TikTok Canada

IYC President Desarae Bilinski interviewed Kairyn Potts, an Indigenous Social Media influencer who advocates for mental health awareness, while sharing humour and culture throughout various creative outlets. His presentation was sure to inspire Indigenous youth with an interest in social media and storytelling. The presentation concluded with a group TikTok video involving as the youth got to show off their dance moves together.

Elections & Voting

The elections process began as Ella Mayer and Shady Hafez gave a brief presentation offering insight on the IYC elections procedures and what to expect during the voting process. Although there wasn’t a large number of youth vying for positions, the conclusion of the elections allowed for all Executive positions to become filled by old and new IYC members. The positions were filled by Averi Doxtator as the new IYC President, Shelby Provost as Vice-President, and Sarah Shuttleworth as Secretary. The Treasurer position was filled at the time of elections; however, the position has since become vacant.

Mock Annual Meeting: Jocelyn W. Formsma

Jocelyn Formsma provided the youth delegates with a brief presentation on what to expect at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). She reviewed the corporate structure of the NAFC, the procedures and order of events that take place at an AGM, including the importance of giving youth an opportunity to have a voice.

“This is an opportunity to share your voices, you are more than capable – we need to learn from you” – Jocelyn W. Formsma, NAFC Executive Director

The Nelson Mayer Youth Recognition Awards

The recipients of the Nelson Mayer Youth Recognition Awards for 2021 and 2022 were awarded to Cash Portlock from Miywasin Friendship Centre, AB and Hinauri Nehua-Jackson from the Canadian Native Friendship Centre, AB. Congratulations to you both!

World Café Feedback

In a World Café activity, the youth were asked questions to help the NAFC understand what the needs of the youth are. Below is an example of some of the feedback we received from the Youth Forum.

1. What are the current best practices in youth engagement, and leadership development in the FCM:
 - Learning other's stories and learning about other cultures
 - Youth in decision-making processes like youth council
 - Learn from the elders, listen to traditional stories
 - Social media presence
2. How can we empower youth across the movement?
 - Include youth in decision making
 - Equipping with tools and vocabulary to be confident in participating in politics
 - Safe spaces for healing, especially spaces for folks with addictions (where being sober is not a requirement)
3. Parking lot – is there anything else that has not been addressed?
 - Crisis intervention
 - Youth homelessness supporting those who are transferring out of care or safe houses
 - Two spirit LGBTQA+ safety and sexual health inclusion
 - Learning about other cultures in groups

Observations & Recommendations

Category	Notes	Learnings and Recommendations
Marketing & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signage with agenda posted each day near the entrance to the main room could be considered• All documents and social media posts need to be translated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to ensure all documents are ready with sufficient time to translate• Market the Forum as a 3-day event to include a formal welcome reception (see below)
Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thursday night welcome reception was poorly attended• In the past, IYC volleyball tournament was held the day prior to the main Forum dates• Friday (Day 1) was condensed with programming and was a full day for most attendees and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set aside time in the agenda to visit exhibitors' area• Plan activities for the welcome reception as a formal part of the agenda• Plan for a free evening so youth have a chance to experience the location

IYC Auction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This year, fundraising for IYC didn't need to be a priority and IYC members working the auction could have benefitted from attending the AGM • Auction is great for those with disposable income but another more accessible option would have encouraged more participation • IYC auction was set up near the exhibitors' space, which increased foot traffic, but was it effective in drawing visitors to the auction? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to implement cut-off date for submission of donations • Donations could be used for random draw prizes throughout the event or given to FCs to do online raffles, etc. • Consider location of IYC auction – is it better to have them with exhibitors or in a separate space?
Exhibitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were unaware that some exhibitors were offering door prizes/random draws, with some high-value prizes going to observers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm with exhibitors if prizes will be given and whether prizes will be dedicated to youth only
Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would've been great to have speakers with diverse social identities that attendees can relate to • Some youth would have liked to see more speakers from the community/grassroots level • Unsure of Ron and Sage's attendance during the Opening Ceremony, perhaps needed more filler time with NAFC report and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for speakers/facilitators with diverse lived experiences and identities (gender, industry, etc.) • Consider panel of community/grassroots speakers in partnership with local FCs • Consider involving more members of the IYC in the Opening Ceremony
Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High number of observers compared to youth delegates • Attendees were representative of all regions • 2/3 of all youth delegates were French speaking, resulting in limited interactions with Quebec youth because of the language barrier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially limit the number of observers that can register • Add consent portion to registration for attendees to share contact information with others prior to/after event for networking purposes
Food & drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food was great overall • One break didn't have any food since the timing changed close to the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If budget allows, plan for a morning and afternoon themed break with snacks
Entertainment & Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday's welcome reception didn't have any planned workshops or activities like we had originally wanted • In the future, we can consider involving IYC members and partner organizations to host 	<p>Ideas for icebreakers and teambuilding activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal introduction circles on day 1 • New name tags for each day to change assigned seating daily

	activities on the day prior to main programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo scavenger hunt – consider GooseChase as a platform (\$ fee associated)
Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation headsets were provided during presentations but during breaks and mealtimes, it was difficult to engage with Quebec youth due to the language barrier • During Quebec youths’ French presentation, headsets were not fully explained to all English speakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure headsets are available for all participants at each table with formal instructions on how to use them • Remind attendees of multilingual presentations at the beginning of each day • Potentially assign headsets each morning per individual
Gifts & Swag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If participants attended YF and AGM, they likely left with 3 swag bags with many repeat items (e.g., water bottles) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate swag items with the host FC and AGM to avoid duplication of swag
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel reimbursements for FC/PTA youth has been confusing and creating barriers for youth to attend • Alyse & Ava, former IYC members were not acknowledged during programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a system/process for paying travel advances to FCs/PTAs • Need to determine COVID protocol prior to event

In Closing

A closing prayer from Elder provided meaningful reflection to all while highlighting the importance of coming together. Talon Fire Bird then thanked all presenters, sponsors, delegates, NAFC Staff, IYC, and Elders for their time and participation at the 32nd Annual Youth Forum. After two years of being apart, this Youth Forum was much needed as youth from across the FCM came together to connect and reconnect with likeminded youth. We look forward to the next Youth Forum in Edmonton, Alberta in July 2023.