

BRAINSTORMING BOOKLET



2011

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Are you an Indigenous youth? Do you want your voice heard? Then share your thoughts and ideas with us. Help us create the *Indigenous Youth Engagement Policy* that will facilitate the involvement of youth in important decision making that affects the future.

Each eligible youth will have a chance to win a complete X-Box system with Kinect!



Brain Storming Booklet

The purpose of this brainstorming booklet is two-fold. First, to provide background information on the Youth Engagement Policy Forum Project and to update youth on its current status. Second, to engage youth in the project and to ask four (4) focus questions that will help the youth planning team to develop the framework for the youth policy initiative. This workbook will provide an opportunity for all First Nations youth in Ontario to share their ideas, thoughts and experiences in relation to the development of this new policy, which is being created by the provincial government.

1. BACKGROUND

Chiefs of Ontario

The Chiefs of Ontario (COO) is a secretariat for 133 First Nations in Ontario. It serves as a unified voice for political leadership on regional, provincial and national priorities affecting First Nation peoples. www.chiefs-of-ontario.org

COO is mandated by resolution through Ontario Chiefs in Assembly to establish and advance the development of a regional youth voice responsible for advocating and promoting the development and implementation of local and regional youth priorities and initiatives.

Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council

The Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council (OFNYPC) established and managed under the auspices of the Chiefs of Ontario serves as the official youth voice for the Ontario First Nations on all issues related to youth affairs. In various forums, meetings, conferences, workshops and training sessions and other venues hosted, sponsored or advocated for youth inclusion by COO and OFNYPC, First Nations youth in Ontario have consistently and strongly advocated for a voice in policy and decision making at all levels of government. The youth coordinator for COO coordinates all the activities and initiatives of the regional youth council.

Ontario First Nation youth

First Nations youth are the largest and fastest growing population within the province of Ontario. Statistics show that over 50% of the First Nations population is youth between the ages of 15-29 years and there is approximately 133,000 youth within Ontario.

Youth are often under-represented and excluded in most policy and decision making processes and is historically left to “adults” whether they are youth services providers, leaders, governments or organizations. While there are opportunities for youth to voice their concerns, recommendations and opinions on policy, it is rare when they are actually engaged to assist in the design, development and implementation of the actual policy that follows. (*C Matthew Centre for Native Policy and Research-An exploration of Aboriginal Youth Engagement*). This workbook is all about engaging you(th)! It's your chance to design and develop this new policy that will impact First Nation youth in Ontario!

Mandate

In 2009, the OFNYPC concluded the planning of the OFNYPC Four Year Sustainability Strategic Plan. One of the key goals of the plan is to develop policy that will ensure the youth voice is heard at all levels of government. In June 2009, the Ontario Chiefs in Assembly supported in principle a resolution on the implementation of the four year strategic plan.

Acting upon the mandate of the Ontario Chiefs in Assembly and responding to the needs and aspirations of the regional and local youth groups, the COO Youth Coordinator and members of the OFNYPC met with various government officials to advocate for financial resources to support the participation of youth and meaningful inclusion of their opinions and recommendations in the design, development and implementation of a youth engagement policy. Finally, in January 2011, funding was committed by two provincial ministries; the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs for this initiative.

2. YOUTH LED POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Rationale for a youth engagement policy

Youth are an important resource to the Indigenous Nations. It is important to look at our young peoples as a resource, not as a problem that needs to be solved. Perceiving young people as a resource focuses on long term solutions, identifying needs and developing policies in order to let young people achieve their full potential as citizens and let First Nation communities, organizations and governments benefit the most from future leaders.

First Nation youth have inherent rights and responsibilities that affirm they must be engaged by all levels of government in decisions impacting them. First Nations youth possess inherent rights, protected by the Treaty relationship between First Nations and the successor state of Canada. Young peoples have the right to participate in these processes and this process will provide First Nations youth an opportunity to discuss the creation of a policy that will benefit them directly.

What are the COO and OFNYPC goals related to development of the youth policy?

The goal of the youth policy project is to develop a youth engagement policy that will determine how First Nations youth are engaged, represented and participate in policy planning and decision making processes at all levels of government and in the private and public sectors of society.

How will the project be undertaken?

A youth planning team has been established with a terms of reference to guide their planning activities. There will be five (5) youth forums; two (2) have been urban based to ensure youth living in cities have an opportunity to participate, and three (3) will be community based forums in three (3) First Nation communities.

Current Status of project

The Ontario First Nation's Young Peoples Council supported by Elders, Indigenous experts, the Youth Coordinator of COO and the Students Commission of Canada hosted a planning meeting on April 2 & 3rd, 2011 and invited First Nation youth between the ages 11 – 29 to join them and create the Ontario First Nations Youth Policy Planning Team (OFNYPPT) for the Youth Engagement Policy and Framework. The role and responsibilities of the OFNYPPT is to gather and provide information, resources and services to improve the engagement of the Ontario First Nations Youth. This diverse group represents a wide range of youth; in age, home community, language and experience. They have been trained in youth engagement, facilitation, and youth policy and began learning about the inherent rights and responsibilities of First Nation Peoples. This group is prepared to help facilitate Forums and continue to provide input into the overall process as the Policy and Framework is developed.

The first Indigenous Youth Engagement Policy Forum was held on April 28 & 29th in Thunder Bay, hosted by Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School. The second was held at the Toronto Council Fire Centre on June 4 & 5th, 2011. With 100 registered youth, the Forums were very successful in having Indigenous young Peoples learn more and build their understanding of their inherent rights and responsibilities, Treaty rights and how these connect to policies that impact their lives. The youth participated in interactive activities, large and small group discussions and spent the two days making decisions and recommendations that will be incorporated into the final proposed Policy and Framework.






Definition of Youth Engagement Policy

What do we actually mean when we use the term “Youth Engagement Policy”? What does it mean for First Nations youth? What does it mean for the leaders, Elders, service providers, general citizens of First Nations, and the government of Ontario and all its human resources?

For the purpose of starting this project, we use the term “youth engagement policy” loosely to mean a policy that will be used as a guiding tool and advocacy instrument for youth and young leaders advocating for a more proactive youth policy. It is important to note the definition, purpose, content and elements of the youth engagement policy will be borne out of your ideas, needs, aspirations, concerns, issues and specific realities.

What are the expected outcomes of the project

A draft Ontario First Nations Policy on Youth Engagement that:

-  Will determine how First Nations youth are engaged, represented and participate in policy planning and decision making processes at all levels of government and in the private and public sectors of society;
-  Will outline the framework of a youth engagement policy that is primarily developed by the youth for youth;
-  Is inclusive and representative of youth engagement needs and aspirations;
-  Will serve as a guiding document to youth interest groups;
-  Affect government policy in terms of addressing First Nations youth issues.

The outcomes noted above are temporary and short term. They were used to secure funding for the project. The expected results and outcomes of the draft Ontario First Nations Policy on Youth Engagement rests with the youth vision, dedication, enthusiasm, commitment, skills and abilities to make meaningful change and opportunities.

Brainstorming – open to suggestions. The following questions are only posed to provoke thought regarding the design and implementation of the policy.

Draw a picture or doodle of your thoughts if you are more comfortable to express yourself in this manner.

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