



CHAMPIONS FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH
THE 2011 BC SUMMIT

Fresh Voices from Long Journeys: Insights of Immigrant and Refugee Youth

HOPE
YOUNG LEADERS
ACCEPTANCE JOURNEY
DISCRIMINATION IDENTITY REFUGEE ADJUSTMENT
SCHOOL IMMIGRANT AWARENESS CONFIDENCE
EXPERIENCE RELIGION FAMILY RACISM TRADITIONS ISOLATION
YOUTH INTEGRATION NEW CULTURE LANGUAGE
VOICE CONNECTION MEMORIES KNOWLEDGE
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Report on the 2011 BC Summit
October 13-14, Vancouver, B.C.



REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH
vancouver
foundation



About the Summit

The Representative, together with the Vancouver Foundation, brought together more than 120 immigrant and refugee youth at the 2011 Champions for Children and Youth Summit - *Fresh Voices from Long Journeys: Insights of Immigrant and Refugee Youth*. The youth, originating from more than 30 countries, brought with them a wealth of experience informed by their backgrounds, their entry points to Canada and their legal status here.

Together, they reflected a broad spectrum of newcomers' perspectives – from those who came with their families, and speaking fluent English, to those who had only recently arrived with limited English language proficiency and were still awaiting word on their claims for refugee status. Many had fled from war and oppression but most still felt strong ties to their homelands.

The energy was high as day one of the Summit kicked off with a youth-only and youth-led morning session. Laughter filled the room as the young people prepared for the afternoon. Later that same day they shared their stories, ideas and recommendations with about 60 invited adult guests – business people, political leaders and policy makers who had the capacity not just to listen but also to respond to the issues raised.

Instrumental in planning the conference and bridging the gap between youth and adults was a 23-member Youth Advisory Team, made up of immigrant and refugee youth aged 13 to 24. They came together for the first time in the summer of 2011 and, with support from the Vancouver Foundation and the Representative's Office, held regular meetings to analyze the issues facing themselves and their peers and to shape the Summit's topics and activities.

Like the youth who attended as delegates, members of the advisory team represented a wide range of immigrant and refugee experiences. Each faced obstacles and barriers in daily life, but all gave freely of their energy and time. During the Summit they emerged as leaders, helping to educate, encourage and inspire everyone who attended. This report is dedicated to them, and to all the Summit attendees with sincere thanks.

Youth attendees are all smiles with the Representative as the exhilarating two-day Champions for Children and Youth Summit wraps up.





Youth attendees share their message through a Popular Theatre performance at the 2011 Champions for Children and Youth Summit.

Left to right: Hassan, Richard, Mon, Nkechi, Sharmarke, Catherine and Mustafa share a moment at day two of the Summit.



Message from the Representative



Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth



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The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – signed by Canada more than 20 years ago – protects the rights of all young people to be heard and to participate in decisions that affect them. However, in order for young people's voices to be heard, adults must be listening with open minds and hearts, and be willing to respond in ways that truly make a difference.

The 2011 Fresh Voices Summit was a rare opportunity for government, business leaders and policy makers to listen to, and begin engaging with, children and youth whose voices have too often been muted. Immigrants and refugees face a list of challenges that most born in Canada can only imagine. And yet they are, quite literally, the future of our province.

Every year, about 7,900 children and youth arrive in British Columbia from other countries, hoping to build their futures here. Some are with their families. Others are alone. And many come with little understanding of our language, culture, education system and day-to-day life.

Our governments recognize the vital role of immigrants and refugees in shaping this country: with the exception of First Nations peoples, all of us in Canada can trace our roots to somewhere else. Officially, newcomers are welcomed and valued, yet there are clearly unmet needs among this group of very vulnerable individuals.

We are deeply grateful to the youth and the Vancouver Foundation who led in planning, designing and hosting the Summit, and to all of those who took time away from school, work and family to participate and share their views. We were moved by their stories, often to tears, and awed by their courage and determination. We were also inspired by their willingness to share with us – in addition to their stories – their art, music, poetry and hope for the future.

As grateful as we are for this experience, we must bear in mind that what we heard were only tiny reflections of the lives of immigrant and refugee youth. The Summit was a start, but the right to be heard cannot be upheld through a two-day event. It must be an ongoing two-way dialogue, and that process is just getting underway.

As this report goes to print, we are working to ensure that the voices of these young people are heard more clearly by decision makers. Since the Summit, members of the Youth Advisory Team were invited to speak directly to the Ministry of Education to help senior staff better understand the challenges faced by immigrants and refugees. We also arranged for the youth team to speak to the Legislature's Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth, which represents both government and opposition politicians.

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Within the Representative's Office, we have identified five key areas in which we will act to ensure the momentum from the Summit isn't lost. These are described in detail in the final section of this report and address priority issues ranging from education policy to immigration law.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank the youth and the Vancouver Foundation who led and took part in the Summit. As adults, our willingness to listen is meaningless until young people have the courage, support and space they need to speak out freely. By doing so, the youth at the Summit have given us a rare opportunity to join with them in building a better British Columbia. This report reflects our commitment to live up to that responsibility.



Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth



Youth advisory group members Alejandra and Josiane, with Summit participant Israel (left to right) were instrumental in planning the Fresh Voices from Long Journeys: Insights of Immigrant and Refugee Youth Summit. The youth, together with the Vancouver Foundation, spent countless hours volunteering to shape this great event.

Message from the Youth Advisory Committee

For years, immigrant and refugee youth have been working hard to connect, build leadership and have our voices heard in B.C. In the summer of 2011, a group of young people and youth workers from Metro Vancouver community organizations serving immigrant and refugee youth were brought together by the Vancouver Foundation. We were invited to form a youth advisory committee that would engage youth leadership in the planning of the Representative for Children and Youth's 2011 Champions for Children and Youth Summit. The planning process wasn't always smooth, however, after feeling the overwhelming energy of hundreds of committed youth and allies together in one space over the two-day summit, we can say it was a success, and the work begun by our predecessors was well worth it.

There is something powerful to be said about the ability of agencies with connections and relationships like the Vancouver Foundation and the Representative for Children and Youth to work with youth to influence the state of our community. This historic event wouldn't have been possible if they didn't come together to support facilitators, community workers and youth to speak about the different realities immigrant young people experience in Metro Vancouver.

A big part of why we felt the Summit was successful had to do with the capacity the people in power had to listen and reflect, and the fact that a platform was created that facilitated the empowerment of youth, allowing us to speak up. Words will never do justice to some of the things that were achieved at this gathering, but it is our intention that the ripple effect of this event continues to be felt.

An overwhelming sense of pride surrounds the Advisory Team and what was created at the Summit. There is also a sense of responsibility and commitment to continue to work with our communities and improve the quality of life through continued work and commitment to ongoing dialogue. With the partnerships developed through this process, we believe that progress can be made.

Please read and share the report. We look forward to continuing this work, and seeing our ideas and recommendations become action.



The Youth Advisory Team and special guest Shane Koyczan (far right) during day one of the Summit.

What We Heard – Key Themes



Nkechi and Diego, the morning MCs of day two, keep the Summit attendees motivated and inspired.

Belonging and Inclusion

This was perhaps the strongest theme to run throughout the conference. Many youth expressed a keen desire to meet new friends and to get involved in community activities, but spoke to the reality of feeling isolated, ostracized and socially rejected.

A young man shared that, "Youth need to be told about things like volunteering and community participation so that they can gain experience and do things like apply for scholarships."

One young woman said, "When you say you're a refugee or immigrant, people treat you like you're somehow damaged." Another said, "People are shunned just because they don't speak English, or because they have an accent." An adult at the Summit who had researched issues faced by immigrant

and refugee youth read aloud heartbreaking excerpts from interviews in which young people spoke of "crying and crying and crying – all the time alone and crying."

One of the adult participants said he could only imagine the difficulty. "I travel a lot for work," he explained, noting that he felt completely alone and disconnected in countries where he could not speak the language – and his situation was temporary.

Another adult, an immigrant who had been in Canada for several years, said, "Identity is always the number one issue for youth," noting that all adolescents face a search for self, and that this search is complicated for immigrants and refugees who all too often experience exclusion and discrimination.

One adult panelist said, "We know that girls face different expectations than boys" within their families and communities, are more likely to experience sexual violence, and are more likely to worry about their physical safety. "These are things that girls carry with them every day," she said, adding that more formal research is needed to support improvements in services for immigrant and refugee girls and women.

As one young woman said, newcomers are treated like second-class citizens. "White people don't want to sit next to you. They laugh at you. They treat you like dirt." Many also recounted tales of well-meaning adults feeling sorry for them. "I don't want your pity," one boy said. "What I want is your respect."

The youth expressed concerns about how status/asylum-seeking refugee youth face more precarious circumstances around their ability to complain or self-advocate. Refugees with government status also face barriers to inclusion and finding appropriate support relative to other 'classes' of immigrants. This would include transportation loans, being questioned without regard for child rights or civil liberties and delays in family reunification.

Significant discussions focused on the extra barriers faced by girls and women – and by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) youth.

For LGBT youth at the Summit, the layers of oppression were even heavier. Many spoke of struggling to find acceptance – within their families, within their cultures, and within the broader community. Even though attitudes here are generally less oppressive than in some other countries, one young woman said, "Technically we have full equality, but the reality is different."

She noted surveys have shown that "70 per cent of queer students don't feel safe in school," and LGBT youth are four times more likely to commit suicide. Adding language, race, colour and cultural differences into the mix "creates these incredibly nuanced and complex layers of oppression" youth must face as part of their already-difficult struggle for self-acceptance.

One adult panelist noted that homosexuality is still illegal in more than 70 countries, and in seven it is punishable by death. And yet, as several of the youth pointed out, it is not fair to say that certain countries or cultures are homophobic. "That's just another stereotype," said a young woman from China. "My culture is not so much homophobic as uncomfortable with issues of sexuality in general."

Not all youth at the Summit had experienced discrimination, and many said they were grateful for their new lives in Canada, but those who shared their stories were unanimous about the sense of loss and dislocation that come from being "in between."

For example, one young woman who'd spent 10 years in a refugee camp said, "It was sorrow, tragedy, all those emotions, but for us it was home. It was where we grew up," and she couldn't help but miss certain aspects of her former life.

Another youth said, "When I came here, I was proud of my culture. But I didn't know what to do – how to be Canadian without giving up my values and identity."

K'naan, the Juno Award-winning artist from Somalia, told youth at the Summit they were just like younger versions of him. He shared his own story of "finding my identity and experiencing that confrontation with a new culture and language."

He encouraged youth to remember that, even if it feels that way, they are "not starting from zero" in Canada. "You didn't come here empty," he said. "Don't be afraid to be yourself. Bring all of yourself, contribute, and you can lead change."

Jorge (left) with award-winning hip hop artist and humanitarian, K'naan. K'naan came to the Summit and brought his message of hope and peace, while sharing his own experiences as an immigrant youth.



Those sentiments were echoed by a young First Nations woman who reminded the Summit that many of her people had been forced to sever ties with their language and culture through mechanisms such as residential schools.

"I envy you," she said, "because you all know your language, and I will never know mine. Don't forget where you're from," she concluded, "and teach your children that."

Education

Youth at the conference were unanimous in their view of education as vital to success. They shared an interest in modeling inclusion at school instead of segregation through ESL-English as a Second Language. And they felt immense frustration with the way the ESL system is performing.

Some shared positive stories. Many said that ESL classes were a helpful way to ease into life in a new country. As one young man said, "It can be more comfortable in ESL classes to open up and speak and share experiences." Another said he was "grateful to those ESL teachers who care so much and take the time to know their students' experiences."

Others pointed out that they had seen the best results when staff from a number of different agencies worked together, with teachers supported by settlement workers familiar with students' cultures and backgrounds.

At the same time, throughout the Summit, youth used words like "arbitrary" and "discriminatory" to describe ESL. The most commonly expressed concern involved a lack of student assessment. There was general agreement that, in many schools, ESL is treated like a catch-all for those not born in Canada. As one young woman said, "Even kids who have no language other than English are put in ESL because they're newcomers."

Many also said that ESL classes felt like a form of segregation. Several said that schools should find more opportunities for "ESL students to increase their time with native English speakers" through such things as outdoor activities and physical education classes. There was also much discussion of ESL stereotypes. "ESL students are seen as mentally disabled," one young woman said. "It happened to me and my sister. Now they're sending her to special needs classes."

Others felt that ESL classes were a waste of time. One youth said, "I didn't learn anything. We just drew pictures." Many were surprised to learn that ESL classes don't count as credits towards graduation in the B.C. education system, asking, "Why didn't anyone tell us that in high school?"

Beyond ESL, many youth were concerned about educational assessments in general. For example, one young woman who completed high school in her home country said she was expecting a great new life in Canada. "But my education was not recognized. I had to start all over again." She called the experience "sad and depressing. It made me feel like I'm a nobody."

Many youth told of being put in grades far below their levels of subject-matter knowledge. And one young woman shared her frustration with B.C. graduation requirements, which include instruction in a language other than English. "I have a language I already know," she explained with obvious exasperation, "but they only acknowledge French or Spanish."



Art displayed at the Summit was the work of the young artists from The Illustrated Journey Youth Project.

Many of the issues raised were heard, and responded to, by a Ministry of Education senior staff person. The staff member took part in a breakout session on the education system and told the Summit she had heard the young people's voices loud and clear. She promised changes, acknowledging that "the whole notion of ESL is outdated. For one thing, for many kids, it's not their second language. It's their third, or fourth, or fifth."

As part of its commitment to change, the ministry brought members of the Youth Advisory Team to Victoria to address its senior staff, to "give people working in every area of the ministry the opportunity to hear directly from immigrant and refugee youth about their experiences – what's working, and what isn't" in the B.C. education system.

Family

"Nothing is more of a challenge for a family than migrating to a new country." That statement, from a settlement worker who served on a panel at the Summit, was wholeheartedly supported by the youth taking part. Even though they faced their own struggles, many said their parents bore the brunt of the difficulties. One young woman said tearfully, "They have made such sacrifices. It's not fair that they have to come here and start from nothing."

Starting from nothing was a common theme, even among those whose families had been well off back home. Many shared stories of the impacts of changes in employment and financial status.

"My parents were professors back home," said one youth. "Here, they had to take menial jobs." Another spoke of the challenges of having little income and experiencing for the first time "things like taking the bus, going to a laundromat, having to rent an apartment. At home we didn't know these things, we had a house and a car."

In other families, parents unable to find jobs at all became depressed and increasingly isolated. Some families broke down completely. One young man said matter-of-factly, "Like a lot of new immigrants, my parents split up after arriving." That, he said, created added stress for the whole family.

Many at the Summit shared stories about children becoming heads of households. "They had to depend on me," said one young woman, "because I'm the one who speaks English. I had the power, and the responsibility."

Others struggled with the fact that they had left their families behind. One young man who came from Iran alone as a refugee said, "It's the Canadian dream to have a good life, but my parents are not here so this is not my home. I still feel like Iran is home."



Members of the Youth Advisory Team are recognized for their countless volunteers hours to help shape the Summit.

The Representative joins a group of Summit youth participants during a break.



That sense of tension between the family's culture and the "new" society of Canada resonated through many of the discussions at the Summit. Youth spoke of feeling torn between the two realities.

One young man said, "I see myself as part of Canadian society now. But I don't know how to communicate with my parents because they're, like, 'Are you ashamed of us?' They see my adoption of Canadian life as somehow a rejection of them."

Many spoke of the need for supports and services for parents, including English language classes and help to gain professional credentials and meaningful jobs in Canada. As one young woman said, "Take some of the burden off youth and give support to parents so they can be proud of who they are and where they're from."

Community Services

B.C. and Canada both provide programs and services to help newcomers settle here. Many at the Summit shared positive experiences with programs such as My Circle, which trains young immigrants and refugees to work as peer and community leaders. Several also praised the services of Welcome House, which provides support to government-assisted refugees arriving in the Lower Mainland.

One young woman said, "My Circle saved my life." And a young man remarked that community organizations "work well, especially when you have settlement workers from your own country. You can get help with forms and support in your own language."

At the same time, many youth spoke of being underserved. For example, several pointed out that Welcome House only works with government-supported refugees, while those who arrive on their own are often left to fend for themselves. One asked, "If I get Canadian citizenship, will I have more power in Canada? Is that what it will take to make me a human being?"

LGBT youth spoke of facing the "triple challenge" of racism, homophobia and discrimination based on language. They agreed on the need for more "safe spaces for queer immigrant and refugee youth." Others called for more safe spaces for immigrant and refugee girls.

Many at the Summit expressed frustration with the federal immigration system. Too often, it was seen as making things harder for newcomers.

For example, one young man who fled a country where it is against the law to be gay said he thought the worst was over when his plane touched down in Canada. He tried to claim refugee status only to learn that Canadian officials expected him to prove he was gay. "How do I do that," he asked, "when I have spent my whole life pretending not to be gay?" This was just one example of policies many felt were counterproductive.

Several shared concern about refugees having to pay back loans for their travel to Canada. "We're trying to start a new life here," one said, "and we are already in debt."

Others spoke with frustration of having to pay "a huge amount of money for documents" in order to apply for residency. One man said, "It speaks to the feeling that refugees are being taken advantage of. People have to pay a big amount of money and may still be rejected."

Many of those who spoke at the Summit felt there was a greater need for culturally sensitive services of all kinds. Several cited the need for better training for teachers and other helping professionals.

For example, one young woman sought out a counselor to talk about the issues she was facing as an immigrant "and all the counselor wanted to talk about was violence and abuse. Those were not my issues. That was just her perception of my culture, that it abuses women."



Maria and Josiane address the Summit attendees.

Several young people said their own attempts at seeking help had been so discouraging that they chose silence. They felt misunderstood at school, at home and in their communities and, with nowhere to turn, bottled up their emotions – with negative effects. As one of the adult participants said, "Research has shown there are higher rates of self-harm related to keeping things in and not being able to access supports."

Several speakers pointed out that, with changing immigration patterns, visible minorities are now much better represented in society. "Growing up in Victoria in the 1970s I was completely isolated in terms of race and colour," one woman said, adding that youth today can at least see, and connect with, others who are going through a similar experience.

Many spoke of the struggle for acceptance and the dream of being appreciated for who they are as individuals. As one woman said, "The worst thing is being forced to hide who you are."

Speaking Out and Leading Change

In spite of the barriers they faced in their own lives, many youth at the Summit said their greatest concern was for those who would come after them. After recounting her own story of difficult and painful transitions, one young woman said, "But that is all over now. Others are coming. We can learn how to make Canada a better place for them."

Some of the youth were already experienced, passionate advocates, but for many others, the whole idea of speaking up was new, as was the idea that people in positions of authority would actually listen. As one young man said, "Coming from my country, freedom of speech is a culture shock." Many agreed that advocacy services should be prioritized for refugee claimants and others who do not yet have status.

In other cases, youth said they had spoken out and had done their best to make their voices heard, but "too often, adults listen but nothing gets done."

Most participants cited the Summit itself as an example of what was working. One young woman said, "If not for this conference, I would have no way to share my opinions." And K'naan told the youth, "It's incredible that you have this forum, and people available to help you. We didn't have this in my day. We just had the police."

For adult participants, many of the young people's stories were a wake-up call. One said, "In B.C., we've become complacent. It's easy to take human rights for granted and not understand the severity of losing them." Another said, "Sometimes people set up programs intended for you, but nobody's spoken to you. So the programs don't work for you."

Many participants expressed concern about immigration laws and policies, particularly Bill C-4 – proposed legislation that was, at the time of the Summit, before the federal government. The bill spelled out new rules for refugee claimants, which many felt would only further limit their rights and freedoms.

One adult panelist said, "I don't even want to think about C-4." But, after considerable discussion, several young people agreed to use the Summit as a vehicle to launch a petition drive. A letter expressing concerns about C-4 was shared with all participants, along with encouragement to speak out against it.

One of the invited guests, an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly, reminded the youth that "People's voices can be heard in many ways. This conference has been amazing, but this has to continue outside. Call your MLA. Call your MP. Write letters. It does make a difference."

One of the Representative's staff reminded youth that they can always seek help through the Representative's Office. "You do not have to be a Canadian citizen to access help," she said. "Call us. We can help you."

One young woman who had overcome her own fears said, "We have a choice – to stay in a dark spot, or to speak out." She congratulated other youth for having the courage to participate. "Bit by bit," she said, "we are piecing together a better world by sharing ourselves with others."



Top left: Vi Nguyen presents Farhat with a door prize provided by the generous youth sponsors.

Bottom left: Mary McNeil, Minister of Children and Family Development, and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Representative for Children and Youth during day two of the Summit.

Top right: Maria and Pablo share their powerful voices with the Summit attendees.

Bottom right: (left to right) Kim and Cia present Shashi Assanand with a thank-you for her work as a panellist.

Next Steps – Key Action Items

Over the course of the two-day Summit, many ideas and recommendations were put forward for consideration. Much of the feedback from the youth was relevant not only to the work of the Representative, but to many other government organizations. Reflecting the voices of these youth, the Representative's Office commits to bringing this feedback to light in the many meetings and daily work in which it participates. The Office also commits to advocate specifically for the following:

Action Item 1: Ongoing Youth Advisory Team participation

Youth Advisory Team members taught the Representative's Office much through their work in planning and hosting the Summit, and it is clear that they can play an important continuing advisory role. As well, numerous recommendations arose from each session, and these need to be reviewed to identify those for which the Representative can and should take further action. Youth Advisory Team members can help to ensure that the voices of immigrant and refugee youth continue to be heard throughout government and considered in decisions regarding child, family and community services. The Representative is fortunate to have the Vancouver Foundation's assistance with this.

The Representative commits to working with the Youth Advisory Team over the next two years, to continue the dialogue around ideas coming from the Summit and to take action to help improve the lives of immigrant and refugee youth in B.C.

Action Item 2: Work with Youth on Mentorship Strategies for Immigrant and Refugee Youth

The need for mentorship came up many times during the 2011 Summit. Youth would like to formalize a system where more established immigrant/refugee youth could offer support to newer arrivals from the same country/culture and/or facing the same issues – e.g., girls, survivors of war, LGBT youth. It was widely recognized at the Summit that children and youth could really benefit from having a mentor assigned to them when they first start school in Canada, who speaks their language and understands their culture and the challenges they face.

The Representative commits to working with youth to help them develop strategies for formalized mentorships within their communities.

Top: Tiba from the Youth Advisory Team interacts with attendees during the break.

Bottom left: Farhat and Shathi enjoy some catch-up time at the Summit.

Bottom right: Sandrina, Andrea and Ninu gather with a common interest – to hear the voices of immigrant and refugee youth.



Action Item 3: Improve the School Experience for Immigrant and Refugee Youth

Following the 2011 Summit, the Ministry of Education organized a meeting between the Youth Advisory Team and a large group of ministry staff. Concerns about the ESL system were among many issues presented by the Youth Advisory Team. Subsequent to this meeting, the Education Minister announced that English as a Second Language (ESL) programs from kindergarten to Grade 12 will soon be officially known as English Language Learning (ELL) programs. The need for a name change was raised repeatedly by youth at the 2011 Summit, as many felt that naming the course “ESL” suggests that English is their second language, when it might be their third or fourth. As well, youth said, the name does not reflect or acknowledge their diverse backgrounds and personal circumstances.

The Representative commits to supporting youths' continued working relationship with the Ministry of Education to encourage and actively support improvements and enhancements to ELL and social inclusion programs, and to help ensure that momentum is not lost, youth voices are heard, and youth remain engaged in reviewing and reporting back on changes made to ensure they fully address barriers and issues.



CBC Radio producer Michelle Eliot (left) hosts the lunch time Following in Our Footsteps Panel with guests Pascaline Nsekera, Eric Wong, Shashi Assanand and Ujjal Dosanjh (left to right).

Sharmarke and Richard sport RCY toques during a break at the Summit.



Action Item 4: Take Concerns to Ottawa

Youth speaking at the 2011 Summit spoke often and spoke powerfully about personal hardships in their lives because of a variety of federal immigration policies and processes, and international agreements. While the Representative has no jurisdiction over federal matters, opportunities can be sought to connect refugee and immigrant youth to political decision-makers. As well, the Representative can work with her counterparts on the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates to make sure such issues are raised with the federal government and that the voices of refugee and immigrant children and youth are heard.

The Representative commits to working with youth to encourage federal policy and decision-makers to consider the impact on refugee and immigrant youth when considering policies and practices specific to immigration issues.

Action Item 5: Regional Immigrant and Refugee Youth Meetings

During the planning process for the 2011 Summit, the issue of hearing the voices of refugee and immigrant youth who live outside of the Lower Mainland was raised. While those living in other regions will share many of the same issues as Lower Mainland youth, they will also have their own unique sets of challenges and barriers, and their voices deserve to be heard as well. Regional 'mini Summits' will also be good venues for reporting back on progress on recommendations made during the 2011 Summit.

The Representative commits to holding several regional meetings across B.C. with immigrant youth, to hear their unique concerns and the recommendations they may put forward.





Mark Gifford (right) and Abdullah (center) share the findings from the breakout sessions with Darryl Persello (left), RCY Advocate.



Artwork displayed at the Summit was created by young artists from The Illustrated Journey Youth Project.

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