



Creating A Sustainable Dialogue Around Elections

Year 2 Final Report

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Executive Summary

Apathy is Boring and Elections Alberta have partnered for a four-year project to encourage youth to vote by conducting peer-to-peer outreach, providing young voters with elections information, developing resources with nonprofit partners in both Edmonton and Calgary, and rallying the nonprofit sector around youth electoral engagement.

Year 2: Election Readiness Toolkit

During Year 2, we created and disseminated the election readiness toolkit. This toolkit was designed based on interviews that were conducted with volunteer organizations across Alberta, as well as surveys from youth that were gathered during the election campaign in April 2015, and research gathered from across the province and country with regard to best practices. The intended audience for this project is youth between the ages of 18 and 25 who are not pursuing higher education.

Project Highlights:

- A database of 80 Alberta-based community organizations created
- Direct engagement of 16 organizations through interviews
- Indirect engagement of 40 organization through toolkit dissemination and outreach
- Toolkit dissemination and reach of 24,259 online users

Community Outreach and Interviews:

- Database of 80 community organizations who work with diverse populations of youth compiled
- Outreach with 40 organization conducted, including phone calls or emails
- Interviews with 16 organizations conducted

Creation of an Election Readiness Toolkit:

- **Manual:** Our manual, *Creating Sustainable Dialogue Around Elections*, was developed to help community organizations support youth engagement and involvement when an election is called. In it, there are community engagement tips, case studies, and academic findings.
- **Game:** We created a Day in the Life Quiz that draws a direct link between the everyday life of young Albertans and the government. Having an understanding of how each level of government really affects day-to-day life is essential in building the relationship between youth and their government.

- **Video:** The video touches on how policy affects young Albertans, and how young Albertans can affect policy. We break down the process to explain how voting works in Alberta and how the issues youth care about are influenced by policies.

Online Dissemination of the toolkit:

- Reached 24,259 online users nationally through social media channels, website, and newsletter
- Reached 17,147 online users in Alberta through social media channels and partner organizations
- Indigenous Vote Alberta shared our resource with 529 users on Facebook
- Our partner Edmonton NextGen shared the resource with 1901 users on Facebook
- Our partner Edmonton Youth Council (Chair) shared the resource with 805 users on Twitter

Website:

- From September 1st to November 1st 2016, 87.45% of new visitors (534 total visitors) to apathyisboring.com were from Alberta.
- During the same time period, 643 unique visitors came to the Elections Alberta project page on apathyisboring.com

Partners:

- During year 2 of this project, we worked with Calgary Public Library, Alberta Council for Global Cooperation, Youth Central, Communitywise Resource Centre, Old Strathcona Youth Society, Beltline Youth Centre, iHuman, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, YMCA Calgary, Centre for Newcomers, Pride Centre of Edmonton, Next Up, Peer Mediation and Skills Training, Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Edmonton Youth Council, and Next Gen.

Introduction

Alberta routinely has some of the lowest rates of electoral participation in Canada. Recent data indicates that Alberta's youth are the least likely to cast a ballot federally or provincially (Statistics Canada, 2015; Elections Canada, 2012). In the 2015 provincial election, overall voter turnout was 53%; youth voter turnout was much lower, at only 25% (Elections Alberta, 2015).

There are a few factors that could explain Alberta's lower levels of voter turnout: Alberta is the youngest province with a median age of 36.1 years (Statistics Canada, 2012), has the lowest levels of post-secondary enrolment in Canada, and the highest dropout rate for both university and college (Statistics Canada, 2008a). Alberta also has a higher proportion of youth that drop out of high school than do other provinces, especially in rural areas and small towns (Statistics Canada, 2008b).

Because education and environment are such key factors in explaining rates of voter turnout and civic engagement, dropout rates may be important signifiers in exploring Alberta's voter turnout. This further indicates the need for resources and alternative spaces for education when it comes to democratic participation.

The fact that youth have felt disconnected doesn't necessarily mean that they are disinterested and don't care about particular issues. Youth are far from being apathetic about the issues that affect them. It's about engaging with them in a meaningful way about the issues they care about and connecting those issues to their government.

There are three consistent themes that appear throughout the research on youth voter turnout and best electoral mobilization practices. First, voting behaviour is a gradually acquired habit. Second, education is the most significant factor correlated with becoming a habitual voter. Third, peer-to-peer contact is the best method for mobilizing youth to vote or to get involved in an electoral campaign. So, equipped with this information, we set out to tackle the existing barriers to youth engagement, by educating, engaging, and informing youth.

Year 1: Get Out the Vote Campaign

During year one, Apathy is Boring conducted a Get Out the Vote Campaign for the 2015 Alberta provincial election with Street Team volunteers. Through online and on-the-ground outreach, Apathy is Boring, along with partners and volunteers, reached out to Albertan youth, providing them the education and tools they needed to get out to the polls. Here are a few campaign highlights:

- 91 900+ users reached over Twitter in 7 weeks;
- 600 face-to-face conversations with youth across Alberta about where, when & how to vote;
- 300 hard copy election information tools distributed;
- 5 100+ views of our online voting resources.

Year 2: Election Readiness Toolkit

The focus of Year 2 was the creation and dissemination of the election readiness toolkit. This toolkit was designed based interviews that were conducted with volunteer organizations across Alberta, as well as surveys from youth that were gathered during the election campaign in April 2015, and research gathered from across the province and country with regard to best practices. The intended audience for this project is youth between the ages of 18 and 25 who are not pursuing higher education. In order to be more closely connected with community organizations in Alberta, we hired an outreach coordinator based in Edmonton, David Herbert, as well as an academic advisor based out of Calgary, Dr. Melanee Thomas. Having people involved with the project on the ground in Edmonton and Calgary allowed us to practice what we preach- that is, fostering peer-to-peer connections and building lasting relationships. Here are some of the highlights from year 2 of this project:

- A database of 80 Alberta-based community organizations created
- Direct engagement of 16 organizations through interviews
- Indirect engagement of 40 organization through toolkit dissemination and outreach
- Toolkit dissemination and reach of 24,259 online users

Year 3: Election Readiness Workshops

Moving on to year 3, we plan to take the connections we made and the relationships we built among community organizations in Alberta and deepen them. In Year 2, we laid the groundwork by working with an academic advisor and a coordinator based in the province. We built a database of organizations that work with a diverse population of youth, and did consistent outreach to connect with these organizations. Now in year 3, we will conduct workshops across Alberta, and meet community organizations and the youth they serve in person. We live by the philosophy that peer-to-peer engagement is the most effective way to change behaviour, and so Year 3 of this project is about applying that philosophy. We will be hiring a workshop facilitator based in Alberta, and conduct 18 workshops using the tools created in Year 2 and working with organizations identified in the database. Where Year 2 was building relationships,

creating and disseminating the toolkit over the phone and digitally, Year 3 focuses in on face to face work, in person workshops, and further investing in the network of community organizations to support civic engagement education.

Nonprofit Database And Outreach

After conducting research, scanning the nonprofit sector in Alberta, and consulting with our academic advisor on this project, we identified 80 youth-relevant organizations and compiled them into a digital database. Along with the organizations' name and contact information, we included 6 research categories: geographic area, mission, number of full-time staff, audience/reach of youth online, audience/reach of youth offline, and the demographics of the youth audience. To attain the information and successfully complete the 6 research categories, we engaged in conversation and outreach with over 40 of the organizations. Out of the 80 organizations we researched, we chose the top 40 we would reach out to based on their social media following and online presence. The focus on online distribution was because of the digital nature of the tools developed as part of the toolkit. This database resource has proven very helpful in targeting our outreach and will be the basis from which to build off of for Year 3. See Appendix A for a sample of the database.

Literature Review of Youth Engagement

Research was conducted on youth political engagement and best mobilization practices in Alberta and Canada and compiled into a 10-page literature review. There were three themes identified in the review: First, voting behaviour is a gradually acquired habit. Second, education is the most significant factor correlated with becoming a habitual voter. Third, peer-to-peer contact is the best method for mobilizing youth to vote or to get involved in an electoral campaign. We also looked at the impact of Alberta Context on these themes- for example, why does Alberta historically produce the lowest rates of electoral participation in Canada? The literature review is not meant to be consumed by Albertan youth, but as an informational resource for community organizations or engaged individuals who are passionate about electoral mobilization among youth and want to learn more about where the problems lie and how to tackle them. Not technically part of the toolkit, the literature review provides targeted background information.

Interviews

From the creation of the database, conversations with organizations, and a significant outreach initiative, we were able to conduct interviews with 16 organizations across the province: Calgary Public Library (Calgary), Alberta Council for Global Cooperation

(Edmonton), Youth Central (Calgary), Communitywise Resource Centre (Calgary), Old Strathcona Youth Society (Edmonton), Beltline Youth Centre (Calgary), iHuman (Edmonton), Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (Calgary), YMCA Calgary (Calgary), Centre for Newcomers (Calgary), Pride Centre of Edmonton (Edmonton), Next Up (Calgary), Peer Mediation and Skills Training (Calgary), Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (Calgary), Edmonton Youth Council (Edmonton), and Next Gen (Edmonton).

The interviews were approximately an hour long and were split into two sections- questions regarding the organizations themselves and questions about the design and structure of the toolkit and how elections and civic engagement complement (or not) their programming. Through the interviews, we collected a lot of useful information, tips, tricks, and recommendations on how to successfully engage a harder-to-reach youth population. All of the information we collected during the interviews informed our toolkit. We also got an in-depth sense of the living situation and context of many of the youth in Alberta. For example, we already knew that many of the barriers between diverse populations of youth and civic engagement are systemic. Everything from language barriers to lack of job opportunities to overt racism has an impact on whether a person decides to engage with the Canadian political system.

Creation of the Election Readiness Toolkit

After reviewing the survey data from Year 1, the 16 interviews, and completing the literature review, we concluded that the main theme of the toolkit would be to provide educational content through creative channels. The toolkit was created with two main objectives in mind. First, it would be an educational resource to better tackle the barriers of lack of knowledge and comfort around elections and government. Second, to provide community organization staff with enough context and support to engage their participants once an election cycle rolls around.

We created three components of the toolkit: an interactive game, an educational video, and a manual to help provide staff with some context and to guide them through the game and video.

Manual: Our manual, *Creating Sustainable Dialogue Around Elections*, was developed to help community organizations support youth engagement and involvement when an election is called. In it, there are community engagement tips, case studies, and academic findings.

Game: We created a Day in the Life Quiz that draws a direct link between the everyday life of young Albertans and the government. Having an understanding of how each

level of government really affects day-to-day life is essential in building the relationship between youth and their government.

Video: The video element of this toolkit touches on how policy affects young Albertans, and how young Albertans can affect policy. We break down the process to explain how voting works in Alberta and how the issues youth care about are influenced by policies.

The complete Toolkit lives on the Apathy is Boring website as well as on the Elections Alberta website. See Appendix B for a sample of the resources.

Dissemination of Election Readiness Toolkit

Our goal in disseminating the toolkit was to reach 15,000 online users and we reached a total of 24,259 users. In addition, we aimed to have community organizations in Alberta share the resource with their networks. The organizations that shared the toolkit either among their internal or external organization networks include: iHuman, NextGen, The Edmonton Youth Council, the Political Science Undergraduate Association at the University of Alberta and Indigenous Vote Alberta. Volunteer Alberta will be creating a blog post about this resource in early December 2016. The toolkit was also promoted through Apathy is Boring's newsletter that was distributed to **2241** people in October 2016.

On Youtube, the video had **1790** impressions and **339** full views. We targeted viewers from Alberta and at least **325** of the views, and **1780** of the impressions, were by people in the province of Alberta.

On our website, **614** people visited the toolkit on the Elections Alberta project page between September 1 and October 30 2016. **506** of those users were from Alberta.

On social media, we posted about the toolkit a total of 7 times:

Facebook

September 12 through October 14: Geo-targeted Facebook post that reached **10,900** users

September 20: General Facebook post that reached **327** users

October 27: General Facebook post that reached **1650** users

Twitter

September 12: Tweet that reached **1440** users

September 21: Tweet that reached **692** users

October 4: Tweet that reached **644** users

October 25: Geo-targeted tweet that reached **556** users in Alberta

Partners who posted on social media or newsletters:

Indigenous Vote Alberta: Reach of 529 users on Facebook

Edmonton NextGen: Reach of 1901 users on Facebook

Edmonton Youth Council (Chair): Reach of 805 users on Twitter

In total, we reached **24,259** online users. At least **17,147** of the online users we targeted were from Alberta.

Online Channels	Overall Reach	Alberta Specific Reach
A is B Newsletter	2241	
Youtube Impressions	1790	1780
A is B Website, project page	614	506
Facebook post 1	10900	10900
Facebook post 2	327	
Facebook post 3	1650	
Twitter post 1	556	556
Twitter post 2	1440	
Twitter post 3	692	
Twitter post 4	644	
Elections Alberta: News Item	112	112
Elections Alberta: Education page	58	58
Indigenous Vote AB: Facebook	529	529
Edmonton Next Gen: Facebook	1901	1901
Edmonton Youth Council: Twitter	805	805
iHuman (Internal networks)		unknown
U of A Political Science Department (Internal networks)		unknown
Volunteer AB blog		To be determined
Total Reach	24,259	17,147

Facebook post example (119 likes):

Apathy is Boring
September 12 · 🌐

Throughout 2016, we've been working with community partners across the province to create an Election Readiness Toolkit. Thanks to our partners at Elections Alberta, we have an opportunity to continue a conversation about voting and civic engagement between provincial elections. Our toolkit is comprised of three tools:

1) Creating Sustainable Dialogue Around Elections Manual: We developed this manual to help community organizations support youth engagement and involvement ... [See More](#)



Elections Alberta
APATHYISBORING.COM

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 Dani Elle and 118 others Chronological ▾

3 shares

Surveys and Feedback

Surveys are one of the ways that we can hear directly from the organizations and youth we are working with throughout this 4 year project. This year we analyzed the surveys collected from youth during the 2015 provincial election campaign as well as developed a short survey to hear from the organizations we had interviewed in the development of this toolkit. With no incentive provided, we received 10 surveys from the organizations interviewed which we consider to be a good sample.

In Year 1, we collected 253 surveys about voting behaviour among youth in Alberta. Note that this information speaks more to the audience that Apathy is Boring reached in the first year, and is not a representative sample of youth in Alberta. We compiled and reviewed the data and here are some of the key findings:

- The average age of the respondents is 22 years old;
- 57% of the respondents are female while 42% are male;
- Only 42% of respondents volunteer;
- Out of the 253 respondents, 225 are eligible to vote in Canada. A 39% minority have voted in the past five years;
- Only 26% of respondents who voted previously also had parents who voted.
- Only 11% of respondents were both voters and volunteers, which does not seem to indicate a relationship between the two.
- 75% of the respondents were aware that there was a general provincial election in Alberta on May 5, 2015.
- A large majority (82%) said that they intended to vote in the 2015 provincial election.
- Even though a minority of respondents reported voting, a majority agreed that it was their duty to vote in every election.

In Year 2, we shared a feedback survey with community organizations that helped to inform the toolkit resources. The goal of the survey is to get feedback on how well received our toolkit was by the organization we had interviewed. We collected 10 anonymous responses from organizations and interviewees. The results of the survey indicate that the Toolkit’s video would be the most effective tool in educating youth about the fundamentals of democracy and the government, but that the game would be the most effective in actually engaging youth in conversations around this subject.

In answer to the question: “Was the video well-received?”

Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	25.00%
Agree	75.00%
Disagree	0.00%
Strongly Disagree	0.00%

In answer to the question: “Which tool do you think would be the most effective in educating youth about the democratic process?”

Answer Choices	Responses
Game	33.33%
Video	66.67%

Some respondents pointed out that “videos are easier to share” and that “the video outlined everything very simply”, while another respondent said that the game “will get the youth talking about what level of government impacts them the most and therefore they will want to influence that and all levels”.

One partner who filled out the survey gave invaluable feedback that we will be taking into Year 3 of this project: “The effectiveness of the toolkit will come down to the engagement of the presenter. If the presenter is passionate about voting and utilizes the information presented here, almost every young person will want to vote to impact their life today and for the future”.

The in-person focus of year three is based on the feedback received from partner organizations. These tools are helpful and effective, however they will better reach the intended audience once an activity or workshop is framed around these tools.

About Apathy is Boring

Apathy is Boring is a national, non-partisan charitable organization that uses art and technology to educate youth about democracy, with the aim of increasing youth voter turnout, increasing youth engagement in the democratic process, and building a sustainable dialogue between youth and decision makers.

Acknowledgments

This project wouldn't be possible without the work and help of many great individuals. Thank you to our team at Apathy is Boring: Caro Loutfi, Sophie Babinski, David Herbert, Grant Rummel, Alex Cole, Micaela Cayer-Rodman and Sajdeep Soomal.

Thank you to our academic advisor Dr. Melanee Thomas, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary.

Thank you Glen Resler, Drew Westwater, and Ian Tuckey from Elections Alberta, for your commitment to youth engagement, and without which this project would not be possible.

And thank you to all of the hard-working organizations who took the time to interview with us: Calgary Public Library, Alberta Council for Global Cooperation, Youth Central, Communitywise Resource Centre, Old Strathcona Youth Society, Beltline Youth Centre, iHuman, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, YMCA Calgary, Centre for

Newcomers , Pride Centre of Edmonton, Next Up, Peer Mediation and Skills Training, Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Edmonton Youth Council, and Next Gen.

Appendix B - Sample of Toolkit



A DAY IN THE LIFE QUIZ

1. What do you do before heading out for your daily commute?

A Take a shower B Browse the internet C Watch some TV

2. What kind of transportation do you take in the morning?

A Bus/LRT/Walk B Drive in the city C Drive on the highway and/or bridges

3. Where do you head to everyday?

A Community Orgs.
e.g. local employment centre, drop-in centre, Centre for Newcomers B School C Work

4. Where do you live?

A In a house you or your family owns B In an apartment C On a reserve

5. Late in the day, what leisure activity would you most likely do?

A Go to the park and hangout with friends B Attend a community event or activity C Play a sport

A day in the life - Quiz (sample)



1. What do you do before heading out for your daily commute?

A MUNICIPAL / Take a shower

Your shower water comes from city pipelines. Whether you are in Edmonton, Calgary, or another municipality, it is your municipal government's responsibility to make sure that you always have access to clean, safe water.

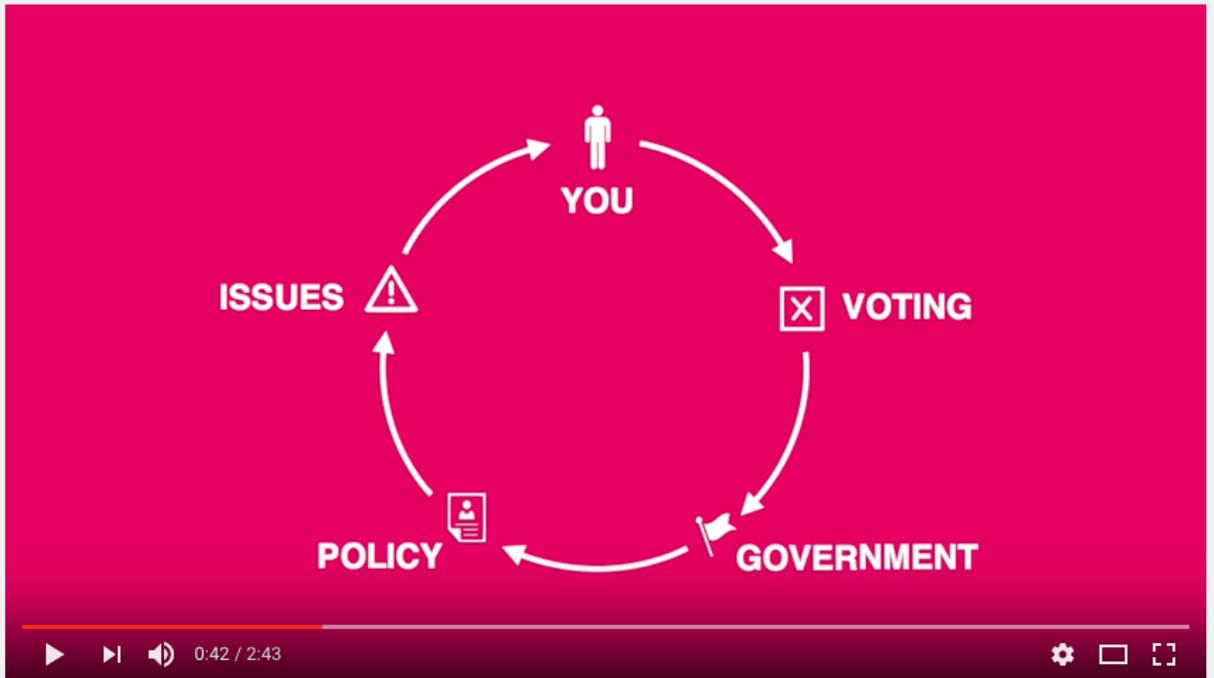
B PROVINCIAL / Browse the internet

There are certain rules in Alberta that protect you from internet-based crimes. One set of rules can be found in the Personal Information Protection Act. When you submit personal information on the internet (like credit card numbers, birthdays, addresses, etc.), you could be at risk for becoming a victim of identity theft. However, acts like PIPA force organizations to take extra care with your personal information, keeping it safe from identity thieves and fraudsters. If you are concerned about how your personal information is being shared, you can contact the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

C FEDERAL / Watch some TV

The Federal Government is responsible for some of the content that ends up on TV and Radio in Canada. A program called the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) makes sure that enough Canadian content is being played on both mediums.

A day in the life - Quiz (sample)



How voting works - Video (sample)



iHuman

iHuman is all about creating workable pathways for Edmonton youth to live healthy lives. Through these pathways, iHuman staff work with youth to establish a support system and build trust relationships.

<http://ihumanyouthsociety.org/>

Knowledge is Pow wow is a civic engagement program at iHuman that is spearheaded by Cory Nicotine, who was once a homeless Alberta youth. A group of young adults from Edmonton's downtown communities hear from leaders representing Indigenous, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim faiths and culture. Over four meetings, 12-30 year-olds shared food, stories, culture and personal stories to break down barriers of suspicion or misunderstanding. The series culminated in a performance showcasing the learning with hip hop as a vehicle to creatively express identity.

"We have a program called knowledge is pow wow, which one of our youth started a few years ago, where the role of that program is to engage youth in civics and to encourage leadership, especially with the indigenous youth that we serve. [...] We have done focus groups and panels where candidates were able to come in and explain their platforms and the youth have been able to engage in conversations with those candidates at the municipal level." - Catherine Broomfield



Youth Central

Inspiring, engaging and celebrating youth through community participation.

<http://www.youthcentral.com/>

Youth central often integrates civics and "how to vote" material into their programming. They also run mock elections, with the aim of getting youth to get a solid understanding of voting logistics. Many participants have trouble taking the activity seriously, and Youth Central organizers have pointed to a lack of understanding as to the connection between voting and everyday life when explaining why mock elections are not effective in creating habitual voters.

"We need to explain in plain language, why politics are relevant to youth. Games that are interactive and engaging work best when it comes to accessing young people. You know you are on the right track when learning feels more like playing than being taught" - Ros Doi