



Marking a Century of Women's Suffrage
Commémorer un siècle du droit de vote des femmes

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Making Change: Educating & Empowering Youth

Making Change is a collection of skill-based education modules, created to equip young women for a variety of political engagement.

These toolkits have three objectives:

1. To **engage and educate** women on a variety of issues that affect their daily lives in work and day-to-day
2. To **enable** women across Canada to explore different pathways to make change and engage in politics and policy on these issues
3. To **provide** policy options, strategies for engagement, and tools of empowerment to allow women to participate in the political and policy process in Canada



Why engage youth?

Working with children and youth to develop their advocacy skills ensures that the next generation will be better-equipped to tackle the world's issues. In times of uncertainty, helping children and youth take action on issues that matter to them can help to relieve feelings of apathy, powerlessness and anxiety while impacting decision-makers.

Young people are not just the next generation but are active today and by fostering youth they can take action today.

Young people often face barriers to engaging in meaningful advocacy work such as adults not taking them seriously. Acting as a bridge between children/youth and decision-makers can help make their unique perspectives heard. This can also emphasize a youth's right to self-determination, strengthen their autonomy, and leadership skills as well as foster feelings of empowerment, belonging and independence.

What kinds of issues should you engage youth on?

Allow young people the space to decide what issues interest and impact them.

Whatever issue you decide to address with children and youth, make sure you are acting as a mentor and facilitator instead of an instructor. Children & youth can and will identify problems that matter to them as well as solutions to those problems. You can play a valuable role by providing knowledge, resources, and perspective for the youths' ideas. Help youth to set realistic goals for their ideas and support them to ensure they do not become overwhelmed. Help them to stay on schedule and offer your own suggestions based on life experience.



Where, when, and how to connect?

Interacting with young people in your community and empowering them to make change can be done through a variety of formal and non-formal programs. Reaching out to a local youth-focused organization about becoming a guest speaker or volunteer can help you make connections with youth-serving groups in your area. You can also reach out to local politicians to see if they offer girls in government groups where you can work with young girls to determine the issues they are passionate about. Or start your own program!!

Tips and Tricks - Connecting and Empowering

Importance of identifying and minimizing bias: Practicing mindfulness meditation by yourself or with the youth you work with can also help to reduce implicit bias.

Bias is a natural cognitive response that helps us to make quick judgements in new social situations. It becomes problematic when we don't acknowledge our own biases and how they impact other people. By identifying and cultivating an active awareness of our unconscious and conscious biases, we can start to examine them more carefully and take steps to fight them.

Being aware of our own bias is especially important when working with children and youth. Mentors and facilitators are in positions of power, and young people are likely to listen to what we have to say. Integrating culturally-diverse perspectives and information sources into your education efforts can help to reduce bias. It can be hard to think outside of your own perspective, which is why elevating marginalized and diverse voices is important when working with youth. Invite in a guest speaker to share their thoughts on a topic or seek out reference material that has been written by voices from outside of your community to increase the diversity of your information.

Make sure you are creating a safe space for children and youth that allows them to make mistakes. Some young people that you work with may have learned stereotypical or prejudicial thinking patterns without being aware that their thoughts and actions could be harmful to others. If you see unintentional bias, intervene in a way that educates, rather than isolates, the young person. Intentional acts of prejudice or bias should be dealt with quickly and fairly to demonstrate that you don't condone the behavior. A youth-developed code of conduct with consequences that are fair and decided as a group can help hold members accountable for their actions. Model how to handle uncomfortable situations by responding non-defensively if you are told that something you said or did was offensive.



Additional resources

Further reading

- [Environmental Youth-Adult Partnership Guide](#)
- [Youth-Adult Partnerships in Public Action: Principles, Organizational Culture & Outcomes](#)
- [Collective Leadership Works: Preparing Youth & Adults for Community Change](#)
- [Learning and Leading: A Tool Kit for Youth Development and Civic Activism](#)
- [Three Ways Mindfulness Can Make You Less Biased](#)
- [Message Not Delivered - The Myth of Youth Apathy](#)

Youth-serving organizations

- [4-H Canada](#)
- [AIESEC Canada](#)
- [Choices for Youth - Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
- [Girl Guides of Canada](#)
- [G\(irls\)20](#)
- [Scouts Canada](#)
- [Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada](#)
- [YMCA](#)
- [YWCA](#)
- [Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#)
- [Healthy Relationships for Youth Nova Scotia](#)