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Introduction

By ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter the Convention) in 1991, Canada formally accepted the obligation, articulated in article 12, to “assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age of the child.” Soon after, in 1991, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which was mandated by the Convention (article 44) to monitor the progress of States Parties’ implementation, identified child participation as one of four general principles along with non-discrimination (article 2), best interests of the child (article 3), and maximum survival and development (article 6), that had to be taken into consideration during periodic reporting.¹ What this means is that child participation is not only a right in itself, but must also figure in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights.²

Article 12 created the obligation. The General Comment on Article 12, adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2009, now provides detailed directions to the State Party on the best ways of implementing the right of the child to be heard.³ First of all, it states that if participation is to be effective and meaningful, it must be understood as a process not as an individual one-off event. Then, it identifies the necessary conditions

¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (1991), Guidelines for initial reports of States Parties, UN Doc. CRC/C/58, III.
³ Ibid.
(paragraphs 133 and 134). According to General Comment No. 12, all processes in which a child or children are to be heard and participate must be: transparent, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk and accountable.\(^4\)

Shaking the Movers is a model of child and youth participation that respects all these requirements and can be adapted for any situation in which collaborative consultation with young people is vital for the elaboration of effective public policy.

**Background**

Shaking the Movers has emerged from a long history of engagement with children and youth in public policy determinations at the international, national, provincial and municipal levels. This history includes activities related to preparing for, and engaging in various processes and events such as Stronger Children – Stronger Families, a national conference on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child held in 1994; Out from the Shadows, an international summit of sexually exploited youth held in 1998; preparatory meetings leading to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS), the session itself in 2002 and the preparation of A Canada Fit for Children, Canada’s National Action Plan in response to the Special Session and its launch in 2004. At the provincial level, youth were prominently involved in the creation of Ontario’s independent Child

\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 26-27.
Advocate’s Office. A municipal example is the creation by the youth council in Pangnirtung, Nunavut, in partnership with both the federal and territorial governments, of an effective crime and suicide prevention program. Lessons learned from these various processes informed the four annual Shaking the Movers workshops convened by the Landon Pearson Resource Centre beginning in 2007 to gain youth perspectives and recommendations on several themes addressed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Rationale

As a model of collaborative consultation, Shaking the Movers not only respects the demands of article 12 and the Convention, but also leads to better decision-making and outcomes. Authentic participation by young people on issues that concern them gives them the opportunity to shake up the movers who are making decisions about them so that planning and programming will respect their rights and serve their best interests. With better understanding of children’s knowledge and experiences, decision-making can be more responsive to the reality of children’s lives. Furthermore, collaborative consultation has a positive impact on the children and youth who engage in it. By enabling their right to be heard and supporting their evolving capacities, participation means that “children acquire skills, build competences, extend aspirations, and gain confidence.” It can also serve to protect them because the experience of participation increases children’s

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confidence in challenging abuses of their rights and gives them more knowledge about
issues that concern them. Moreover, participation provides the basis for democratic
citizenship. “One of the most effective routes to becoming a responsible adult is to be
granted respect as a child and to learn that one’s opinions and feelings are taken seriously
and have value.”

Both article 12 and the General Comment that supports it, call for interaction between
children and adults. Ensuring a proper balanced collaboration between them is essential for
the results to be authentic. This is what Shaking the Movers is designed to achieve.

Shaking the Movers: The Model

The model of the actual event that is at the core of the Shaking the Movers process
comprises two and a half days of interactive encounters among all of the interested
participants. (See a sample agenda in the appendix.) An informal evening gathering
introduces the youth to one another and to the organizers and facilitators followed by two
days of intensive discussion. The issue for consultation provides the substantive structure
for the discussion and this issue is broken down into four sub-themes. Participants will have
been prepared by prior activities and they should be ready to plunge in. The results from the
consultation are collated in the young peoples’ own words into a final report that is
distributed widely to “shake the movers”.

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6 Ibid.
Essential Components to Ensure Success

1. Personnel
   A. Coordinator: This person must be experienced with the issues to be discussed, and committed to working with children and young people. He or she must also be intimately involved in the process (before, during and afterwards) and in frequent communication with all concerned so that what the youth have to say will be heard and attended to by as many people as possible.

   Lesson Learned: Importance of committed, experienced and knowledgeable chair/coordinator

   B. Administrator: A young person with organising, communicating and writing skills
   C. Presenters: to introduce sub-themes
   D. Youth Volunteers: to serve as Facilitators, Recorders and Helpers

2. Place: A youth-friendly site for organising, conducting and reporting on the process.
   The event should consider both the meeting location as well as the residential location for those from out of town. One location that includes both (for example, a university campus) is ideal. Different meeting rooms are required: a plenary space for all participants; and separate smaller rooms for small group work.

3. Time: A minimum of three months is required: two months to prepare; and one month to write the final report.
4. **Resources:** Adequate financial and in-kind resources are necessary, depending on the theme and process parameters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Values of the Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• well-prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• focussed on the youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• rights-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• representation to the extent possible (see further below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Commitment to young people, to the process and to communication is obligatory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to Proceed:**

**Identifying the Theme**

There are many issues with respect to public policy that require collaborative consultation for resolution but whether they are raised by the “movers” or the “shakers” is less important than the commitment of all concerned to the outcome as well as to the process. Once the theme of the consultation has been established and the coordinator selected, a small working committee including two youth will need to be convened to discuss and unpack it into sub-themes for four possible sessions and to devise questions that will shape the discussion in each session.

**Identifying Participants**
Identifying participants requires serious thinking about who is to be involved, what experience they have to share, how they will be supported and the capacities of the organizations to hear and respond to what youth have to say. This may be the most difficult part of the process for two reasons. First, the process requires intensive effort and time to identify organizations and young people who will be representative of the variety of voices that are necessary for collaborative consultation. For example, if the issue to be discussed is how to improve the situation for children with disabilities, there must be over-representation of young people with various disabilities. The second challenge is getting participants to the site of the event. Following the formal commitment to attend the event by participants, logistical arrangements for travel and accommodation will have to be made. There are many ways to select young people to participate. If there is time, a competition can be organized to solicit interest and a committee of young people can choose among the applicants. In any event, organizations that work directly with children and young people should be invited to submit names because as sponsors, they can support both the process and the eventual dissemination. UNICEF-Canada, Girl Guides, Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, child welfare agencies, youth service bureaus, provincial child advocates’ offices, local schools, and others are all possible contacts. There is nothing to prevent interested young people from presenting themselves to a selection committee. After initial telephone or email contact, the next step is to send an introductory letter to explain the consultation details. (For guidance, see sample consultation backgrounder in Appendix A.) Once the organization and/or the individual agrees to participate, formal confirmation forms with
signatures should be faxed to the Shaking the movers Administrator. This confirmation is necessary to support planning and follow up.

Participant Characteristics

The minimum age for participants in a Shaking the Movers consultation is 10. Younger children might not feel comfortable with a complex policy issue. The maximum age is 20. The Convention (article 1) defines children as everyone under the age of 18. However, adolescents are less inclined to use this term to describe themselves and young people up to the age of 20 are still close enough in age to the target group, that they can also be involved. There is no reason not to consult with very young children about certain specific matters that concern them but that type of consultation requires a different, simpler model.7

There are not many issues however, that would exclude older children. Even matters that are generally considered “adult” concerns including, for instance, budgets, can benefit from child and youth collaboration.8

Within the age range for Shaking the Movers, experience has shown that it is better to reserve one of the small groups in which the young people engage during the process for

7For example, in a 1993 project involving 4-5 year-olds in an economically-deprived area of London, England, the distinct perspectives of young children were clearly identified. The study supported the children's production of a mural of their local environment and also how they would like it to be to discover that children objected to grass-covered communal play areas - widely perceived as most appropriate - because it obscured broken glass, dog excrement and discarded drug needles and preferred concrete surfacing. Stepney and Wapping Community Child Health Project, cited in Gerison Lansdown (2001), Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making, Florence: Innocenti Research Centre, p. 8.

younger children. Such as grouping is not rigid; siblings for instance could be kept together. To ensure the best representation in groups, participants are assigned an animal sticker or some other category upon arrival based on age and other characteristics. Ideally, the youth volunteers who act as facilitators, recorders and helpers should be no older than 25 years of age.

The total number of participants should not be any more than 70 persons: 40 youth and 30 facilitators, reporters, volunteers and interested adults to maintain the balance with young people. At a minimum, two thirds of the participants should be children and youth.

During the consultation, accompanying adults form a different group and discuss the same questions to prepare them to hear what the young people will report when they come back from their working sessions. One of the problems identified with many past consultations involving young people is that the balance is skewed towards the adults, thus impeding true participation and making the young peoples’ input into policy making less authentic.

Lessons Learned: In Shaking the Movers, adults should not report back to the plenary session and adults are not in the same rooms as the youth to avoid influencing them.

A child rights-based approach ensures all rights for all children and so to ensure a fully representative group, it will be necessary during a collaborative consultation to over-represent the marginalised groups otherwise their voices may not be heard. UNICEF has
recently shifted its focus to equity in all its work and this involves reaching out to the most disadvantaged young people. In all cases, it is important to build in respect for diversity. Keep in mind that accommodation of various requirements will involve additional expense.

For national meetings, representation from every region is important. There should also be at least one Francophone group to include those who are Francophone or who speak French or are bilingual. Translation is an issue to consider. Formal translation is problematic in small groups. Whispered translation is preferable for plenary meetings.

Logistical Tasks:

Prior to Session

• Participant preparation: Youth-friendly resource materials should be sent in advance. Where possible, participants should be encouraged to discuss the issue under consideration with other young people prior to the consultation so that they can bring more voices to the table.

• Letters to be sent to School Principals and Teachers to excuse student absences. (See Appendix D.)

• Travel: Participants and their supporting organizations are encouraged to take some responsibility for their costs of travel and accommodation. However, full funding should be given when needed to ensure representation.

• Food: To be youth-friendly, food should be tasty, ample and varied. A hot meal at mid-day is appreciated and barbeques are popular.

Lesson Learned: Young people do not really appreciate sandwiches as they are seen as boring.

• Booking of space for plenary and break out sessions
• Arrangements for interpretation if necessary
• Participants, even if not paying themselves, should organize their own travel and accommodation. Rooms can be set aside by the organizers for booking. This is to enhance the collaborative nature of the consultation.
• Recruitment of presenters, facilitators, recorders, and other volunteers.

Lesson Learned: Presenters should be carefully chosen to be demonstrably effective at communicating with youth by provocation if necessary.

• Planning for young people’s experience during the consultation: for example experiential learning through visits, interactive entertainment, fun and games as well as energizers to lighten the sessions.

Budget Considerations
• Transportation and accommodation costs should be kept to a minimum.
• Rental for facilities (if necessary)
• Administrative costs for the coordinator, salary for the administrator who is also the report writer, and honoraria/gifts for facilitators.
• Meals
• Costs of evening gathering prior to the event and cultural activity during the event.
• Costs of design, printing, and distribution of report
• Miscellaneous items
• See checklist below for identification of items that should be procured for the event.
• Funds and resources should come from a variety of sources reflecting common commitment to collaborative consultation.

How long? Meeting Length

The minimum duration is at least two days of meetings. The maximum length depends upon the issue(s) under consideration and upon resources. For instance, Out from the Shadows was five to six days in length. The value added from more time allows youth to choose different modes of expression, for instance poetry, skits, music, and/or the development of a formal declaration. Even a consultation on something seemingly straightforward as tobacco use would still require two days due to the complexity of the issues that need unpacking such as addictions and vulnerability. If there was more time, “movers” could also be invited to engage with participants at the meeting’s end. The core model of two and a half days cannot be reduced but it can be lengthened if the issue demands it as long as there are additional resources.
The answer to the question of whether children should be regrouped with each session or remain with their initial group throughout the event depends upon the length of the event. If the event is longer than two days, it would be important to allow the participants to regroup into different smaller groups. But for a two day event, maintaining the membership of the original small groups has worked best.

Elements that could be added in the future with additional resources:

• Provision of more prior opportunities for young people to understand the issue and to discuss it with others. For example, the model of Out from the Shadows included cross-country and international focus groups that not only discussed the issue but also identified the participants for the consultation.

• Distribution of more youth-friendly documents in advance to participants

• Organization of more post-consultation events for the young people to “shake the movers”.

Follow-up

After the core event, a final report is collated using the young people’s own words. The ideas for positive change are included but not in the form of recommendations: the report should be more thought-provoking than declarative. This allows for the young people’s voices to be heard without adult interpretation. The report should then be distributed to all concerned. Ideally, participants will also talk with their own communities to let them know what happened, promote the ideas that had been articulated and track the impact of their
work. The Coordinator’s task is to ensure that the report is widely distributed and responded to in a meaningful way. For example, a Child Rights Academic Network (CRAN) was created after the first Shaking the Movers consultation and the academics were asked to react to what the young people said. This has now happened three times and the published CRAN responses have been distributed back to the shakers.\textsuperscript{10} The earlier consultations out of which this model emerged have resulted in long-term commitments from both politicians and government officials. If governments take their Convention obligations seriously, then responsible decision-makers listening carefully to what young people have to say will be moved to make things better for young and old alike.

\textbf{Lesson Learned:} Follow-up is less than ideal if time, energy and adequate resources are not available to complete the process.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Young people have the right to be involved in all matters that concern them. Article 12 asserts that young people must be kept in mind in all decision-making. As the UN Committee has elaborated in General Comment 12, the implementation of this right to be heard extends to all settings and situations in which children find themselves including: the family, alternative care, health care, education and school, play, recreation, sports and

\textsuperscript{10} For further details, see http://www.landonpearson.ca/cran.html
cultural activities, the workplace, immigration and asylum proceedings, emergency situations, and national and international settings.\textsuperscript{11}

However, the Shaking the Movers model is most appropriate for collaborative consultation with governments at various levels in fulfilment of their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This process enables everyone who participates to better understand the importance of the Convention in protecting children’s rights. The benefit to the young participants of understanding and articulating their rights with respect to public policy determination not only contributes enormously to their development as citizens, but also to the recognition of their role in society. What their engagement means is that our collective efforts will be more successful.

\textbf{Appendix A: Sample Consultation Backgrounder}

\textsuperscript{11} See further UN Committee, General Comment No. 12, op cit, pp. 18-26.
Identity and Belonging
CRC Articles 29.1.c. and 30

The Third Annual Workshop with Children and Youth sponsored by the Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children’s Rights will take place at Carleton University on Friday, May 30 and Saturday, May 31, 2008.

This year’s theme will be the linguistic, cultural and religious rights of aboriginal children and children belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities living in Canada as articulated by Art.30 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child complemented by Art.29.1.c.

Article 30 reads: “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”

When Canada ratified the CRC in 1991 it undertook in conjunction with the provinces to protect these rights and at the same time under Article 29.1.c, to make opportunities available through education for them to be exercised.

Article 29 describes the aims of education that States Party to the CRC have agreed to and have a duty to build into education systems at all levels. In particular, Article 29.1.c lists that one of the aims of education is

“...the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.”

The key word here is “respect” because nothing is more important than respect for the fulfillment of every child’s human rights.

The format of the workshop will be the same as it was last year: four topics dealt with over two days introduced by knowledgeable people in plenary, wrestled with in small groups of children and youth facilitated and recorded by youth and then back to the plenary to report. The adults will meet separately to discuss the same theme so that they are better prepared to hear...
what the young people have to say when they bring their ideas back to the plenary.

Taking into account the comments made by the young people after the last workshop, an extra effort will be made to enable the young people to get to know one another informally. Student volunteers will try to organize some activities for people who come in early and it is hoped that after supper on day one, the young participants will share with the others some of the aspects of their culture that are particularly meaningful for them through skits, music or crafts.

While everyone is expected to make their own arrangements as they did last year, some billeting for out-of-towners may be available as well as small subsidies for travel. Breakfast, lunch and a pizza supper will be provided on Day One and breakfast and lunch on Day Two. It is hoped to have as wide a representation as possible from all groups addressed by Art.30 and from across the country while still keeping the numbers manageable, up to 60 young people and no more than 20 adults including chaperones where necessary.

Based on the CRC Articles 30 and 29.1.c the four topics to be examined will be: religious and cultural rights on Day One and linguistic rights and Canadian values on Day Two, the latter topic being an examination of how all the separate identities of children living in Canada can enhance a sense of belonging not only to one’s own group but also to Canada and to the whole human family.

The Shaking the Movers workshops are designed to give children and young people an opportunity to explore some very important issues with other young people from a variety of different backgrounds and to articulate them so that adults will pay attention. Ideas and recommendations that emerge from the sessions will be made into a report which will not only be widely circulated but also set the agenda for a meeting of academics and graduate students interested in child and youth rights to take place on or around National Child Day (November 20), 2008.
Appendix B: Participant Confirmation Form

Shaking the Movers IV
May 28–29, 2010

Child Rights and the Media
CRC Articles 13, 16, 17, 34, and 36

Carleton University, A720 Loeb Building

Participant Confirmation Form: FAX BACK TO 613–520–4062

Name:
Age:
Sex:
E-mail:
Organization or school:
City/province:
Special needs (dietary or medical):

Emergency contact (name and phone number):

I intend to join the excursion to Parliament Hill on Friday, May 28th:   Yes / No

IF you are under the age of 18, please have your parent or guardian sign this form. Their signature means that they give permission for you to attend the Shaking the Movers IV Workshop in Ottawa, from May 28-29, 2010.

Signature of parent/guardian: _________________________________
Subject: Shaking the Movers IV: confirmation of registration

Dear workshop participant,

This e-mail [or Fax] is to confirm that we have received your Participant Information Form and that you are registered for Shaking the Movers IV, "Child Rights and the Media," which will take place on May 28 and 29 at Carleton University in Ottawa.

We look forward to meeting you and hearing what you have to say!

Sincerely,
Ilana Lockwood, Workshop Coordinator

Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights
Carleton University
A735 Loeb Building
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6
613–520–2600 ext.1453
Appendix D: Sample Letter for Principals and Teachers

Carleton University
Room A735, Tower A, Loeb Building
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON
K1S 5B6
613-520-2600 ext. 1453

May 2010

Dear Principal and Teachers:

A two-day workshop entitled “Child Rights and the Media” has been organized by the Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children’s Rights to create an opportunity to gather the opinions and recommendations of children and young people in relation to their rights in the media.

The workshop will take place on May 28-29, 2010 at Carleton University in Ottawa. Over the course of the two-days, approximately 50 children and young people will be discussing and providing input on four specific themes framed by articles 13, 16, 17, 34, and 36 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Public media and the right to access information:
   The right to be informed
   The right to be protected

Social media and the right to share information:
   Socializing in cyberspace
   Media awareness and education

The experiences and opinions shared by young people during the workshop will help government representatives, political leaders, organizations, and researchers learn about and better understand the views of children and youth and the impact of these issues in their lives.

Your student, _________________________________, has been selected to participate in this workshop. We expect that this will be an enriching learning activity, complementing a number of educational aims. We invite you to support this unique opportunity by assisting your student in accommodating his/her academic schedule to facilitate participation in the workshop.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Landon Pearson
Appendix D: Sample Letter for Principals and Teachers

Carleton University
Room A735, Tower A, Loeb Building
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON
K1S 5B6
613-520-2600 ext. 1453

May 2010

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- Public media and the right to access information:
  - The right to be informed
  - The right to be protected
- Social media and the right to share information:
  - Socializing in cyberspace
  - Media awareness and education

The experiences and opinions shared by young people during the workshop will help government representatives, political leaders, organizations, and researchers learn about and better understand the views of children and youth and the impact of these issues in their lives.

Your student, _________________________________, has been selected to participate in this workshop. We expect that this will be an enriching learning activity, complementing a number of educational aims. We invite you to support this unique opportunity by assisting your student in accommodating his/her academic schedule to facilitate participation in the workshop.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Landon Pearson
11. **Second Day**: Breakfast

12. Third Session: Plenary to introduce Issue; small group work; and plenary to report back.

13. Lunch

14. Post-Lunch Energizer

15. Fourth Session: Plenary introduction of issue; final small group discussion

16. Plenary to report back on small group work and to sum up the whole consultation.
Appendix F: Consent Forms for Photographing and Quotations

TO BE INSERTED HERE
Appendix G: Checklist of Session Requirements

- office supplies
- name-tags and support documents (ie agenda)
- gifts for young people, ie UNICEF bags with resources
- posters (highlighting the Convention articles under consideration)
- flipcharts and markers
- imaginative evaluation form (attached as appendix): Recommendations from previous event evaluations should be taken seriously.
- directions to room should be posted through the building
- consent forms for photographs and quotations
- access to audio/visual materials since youth present in various ways and should be encouraged to do so
- Means to record (audio and visual) the proceedings
Appendix H: Evaluation Form

YOUR PARTING THOUGHTS

Before you leave, tell us about your experience at the Shaking the Movers workshop. Please complete this evaluation form and hand it in on your way out the door. Your input will help us to plan future events!

1. Please check the box that describes your age:
   □ 17 or younger
   □ 18 to 24
   □ 25 to 29
   □ 30 or older

2. Please check the box that describes your gender:
   □ female
   □ male

3. What is the ONE WORD that best describes your experience at this workshop?

4. What is the ONE THING that you’ll remember about this workshop?

5. What was the most important thing that you learned?

6. Did you feel:

   Safe?
   Yes/No________________________________________________________
Comfortable?
Yes/No_________________________________________________________

7. Did you feel that:

Your voice was heard?
Yes/No_________________________________________________________

Your voice was respected?
Yes/No_________________________________________________________

The workshop was sensitive to your personal needs (e.g. age, gender, food preferences)?
Yes/No_________________________________________________________

The workshop was sensitive to your culture?
Yes/No_________________________________________________________

You had enough time to connect with other participants?
Yes/No_________________________________________________________

8. If we were to do this again… what should we do differently?

9. The last word goes to you: What is the MOST IMPORTANT piece of advice that you’d like to offer to stakeholders in the media (journalists, advertisers, TV networks, etc.) to ensure that young peoples’ right to information is respected and that their voices are heard and listened to?

10. Do you have any other comments?