

Youth Friendly Magazine

REIMAGINED





EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Hey there!

Welcome to Youth Friendly, an Apathy is Boring program's first-ever magazine. The following pages are filled exclusively with youth voices, and we're pretty darn excited about it. But before we go on, here's a bit about us.

Founded in 2004, Apathy is Boring works year-round to support and educate youth to become active and contributing citizens in Canada's democracy. We envision a Canada where every young person is an active citizen, and where youth are meaningfully engaged in all aspects of the democratic process. We know that starts with Canadian organizations and institutions actively working to create safe and engaging spaces for young people. So, that's where Youth Friendly comes in. Youth Friendly is a consulting program through Apathy is Boring that collaborates with partners to drive social innovation by integrating diverse youth perspectives in their work and practices. Through a thorough framework and carefully curated services, our mission is to educate and train our partners on creating spaces where youth can have a tangible impact on the conditions they live in, especially within our democratic institutions.

In this magazine, you'll get to see what our Youth Friendly program is all about. With our primary focus being engaging youth, we have lots of helpful content ahead that taps into what matters most to young Canadians. From a fun personality quiz that determines how to best collaborate with youth, to candid interviews with young advocates who are changing the world, our magazine will help you better understand where Canadian youth are at, so you can meet them there. We address the issues that matter to youth, and how you can work to help tackle them. As you flip through, we hope you gain something valuable — and remember, being Youth Friendly is an ongoing effort that requires long-term commitment.



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PRISCILLA OJOMU

Artist Bio

Priscilla Ojomu is a Nigerian-Canadian with big dreams to tackle the big problems in the world. Priscilla is a third-year Bachelor of Arts student majoring in Psychology and minoring in Sociology at the University of Alberta, where she is involved in community engagement. She is a Student Representative on the Arts Faculty Council, co-founder of Canada Confesses, and she sits on the executive teams of the Undergraduate Psychology Association & Black Students Association. Priscilla is passionate about expressing themes of advocacy through writing, design and photography. Literature, tea, podcasts, art, her family and friends, volunteering and advocating for justice and equity in the world keep her busy.

Artist Statement

My artwork is connected to SDG 3 (which aims to promote healthy lives and improve the well-being of everyone) as it is my interpretation of health during the pandemic. The collage letters depicting "normal," mask covered with flowers, vaccine injection, the global goals emblem, news articles in the backdrop and other elements in the piece come together to showcase various aspects of life during the pandemic that impacted my well-being and sense of "normal" health (physical & mental) in different, significant ways. I am passionate about advocating for health equity, such as equal access to vaccines and a social-justice-oriented pandemic recovery that empowers all. Everyone should have access to the care they need during these times and be mindful of all community members. Returning to "normal" shouldn't be the goal, especially when that normal excludes many marginalized groups. We should instead strive for an inclusive and just society in all.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

We believe that meaningful progress comes by taking a collaborative approach with our clients — which is why we refer to them as our partners. We value our partners' work, and we want our services to reflect their perspectives, needs and insights. So, we approach our partners with flexibility and willingness to learn. Youth-Friendly partners have a say in the work that we do for them to ensure they walk away with customized action items that fit their timeline, capacity and available resources.

We want to help you keep youth top of mind in all your practices. Knowing about how youth think, how they get involved and what inspires their engagement is essential to making them feel empowered. Canada's youth are passionate social innovators, and when their ideas are met with attention, encouragement and resources, organizations are able to create truly engaging spaces for them.

Here's a shoutout to the partner organizations we've worked with over the past year, and how they're engaging young people — or as we like to say, Getting Sh*t Done.

Youth and Philanthropy Initiatives Canada

Youth and Philanthropy Initiatives Canada (YPI) are bringing community organizations and registered charities across Canada to high schools and giving students the agency to choose which cause merits up to \$5000 in award grants. By giving youth the power and responsibility to choose which organizations would most benefit from the grants, YPI is shaping a thoughtful, caring and critical-thinking generation of young leaders.

Duke of Edinburg Award Canada - Passion to Purpose is the initiative under that.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a global program with the goal of challenging, empowering and recognizing young people between the ages of 14 and 24. Since 1963, they have helped motivate young Canadians to set goals and challenge themselves to take control of their lives and futures. They believe that the classroom is not the only place to nurture the potential of one of our country's greatest natural resources — our youth. They strive to reach young Canadians in communities across the country and provide a platform that helps them chart their individual lives and equips them with important life skills.

Prime Minister's Youth Council

The Prime Minister's Youth Council is a group of young Canadians who provide non-partisan advice to the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada. Meeting several times a year (both virtually and in person), Youth Council members discuss important issues relating to their peers, their community, and their country. Outside of meetings, they engage with organizations, meet with policymakers and decision-makers, and attend public events. At their annual Meet and Greet which hosted youth from their entering and exiting cohort, we presented our Youth-Led democratic Innovation (YLDI) framework.

The Fédération de la jeunesse Canadienne-Française

The Fédération de la jeunesse Canadienne-Française (FJCF) recognizes that French-speaking youth across the country need a channel to connect and have their voices heard. The FJCF is doing the important work of bringing Francophone youth across the country together through Canada-wide initiatives. FJCF is made by youth for youth, and they work tirelessly to ensure the unique concerns of Francophone youth are taken into account when designing and planning initiatives.

Canada Service Corps: Go Getters NL

Go Getters is an initiative funded by the Canada Service Corps and hosted by the Community Service Council in Newfoundland and Labrador. Their mission is to increase community service, civic engagement, and advocacy in young adults. Go Getters offers Youth-led programming, exciting professional development and networking opportunities, as well as an encouraging environment for youth to get involved. We worked with the staff on developing their capacity to support their youth in advocacy work, and we were thrilled to present our YLDI framework coupled with First steps of embracing Advocacy work.

4-H

Similar to AisB, 4-H's mission is to empower youth to be responsible, caring and contributing leaders that affect positive change. They run a yearly event called Citizenship Congress that gives 4-H youth members the opportunity to participate in a mock debate, as a way of practicing their public speaking and expanding on their knowledge of parliamentary procedures. Last year's debate resolution explored the topic of having a universal basic income for Canadians — we love that! We were excited to provide 4H members with a presentation on our YDLI framework.





NAHEEN AHMED

Artist Bio

Self_Saboteur is an emerging illustrator, comic artist and zinester based in Ottawa, Canada. She is best known for her work exploring disability and trauma through expressive line work and bright contrasting colours. She is heavily inspired by her culture, especially 19th century Buddhist Thangka paintings, Mughal art, 16th century Rajput Court Paintings and Rickshaw street art. Her illustrations has been featured on various platforms like; Ottawa Inshallah, SICK Zine, Maythorn, Femme and Dandy, Bite Back Distro and more.

When she's not creating something, she's taking care of her two old cats and eating spicy food that makes her cry. Follow her on Instagram or Twitter @Self_Saboteur6

Artist Statement

«**Radical Self-Love**» is an art piece inspired by the book «The Body is Not an Apology». A digital piece on the themes of both community and the internal transformation to be loved as you are, in all your growth and flaws. With vibrant contrasting colors and a growing tree, I wanted to showcase that the love we yearn for, is inside us, we just need to dig deep to get at it.

WHAT HAVE YOUNG CANADIANS BEEN TALKING ABOUT THIS YEAR?

Ah, what a year it's been. From never-ending stresses brought on by the pandemic to growing urgency around climate change, there's no shortage of concerns weighing on young Canadians' minds. It's important that organizations know what's going on with youth so that they can form meaningful connections based on compassion. With that in mind, we've compiled a list of five of the biggest issues facing youth this year. Here's what you need to know.

Mental Health

It's no surprise that youth mental health is... less than great. Young people aren't backing down though, with mental health being one of the biggest talking points for youth this year. From open dialogue de-stigmatizing depression and anxiety to demanding more mental health resources, young Canadians are taking a stand for their mental wellbeing and demonstrating that it's an issue that needs addressing.

Equity and Justice

Summer of 2020 was a social reckoning largely mobilized by youth. Important conversations were sparked about biases and systemic inequities pertaining to race, class, sex, and ability. Young people want to build communities that value creativity, transformative solutions to systemic barriers, and equity for all groups. This wave of equity and justice advocacy is not going anywhere, and young Canadians are a testament to the growing visibility of this movement.

Affordability

The lack of affordability in Canada has greatly impacted youth who are struggling to fund their futures. Whether they're establishing careers, or simply trying to break into the professional world, youth are starting at a disadvantage, as they enter

a precarious job market that often lacks fair pay and benefits. On top of this, the housing market is out of reach for many who feel they will never be able to achieve the life goal of homeownership in the way that previous generations were able to do at young ages. Youth are concerned about affordability, and they desperately need to see it being addressed through legislation.

Climate change

The climate crisis is a major source of anxiety for youth, who will feel the effects of the environment more severely than older generations. Young people are mobilizing around climate change, from organizing demonstrations like climate justice marches, to speaking out on social media through awareness campaigns. Organizations that say they value young people should recognize the urgency of this issue by working to address climate change within their own structures.

Indigenous reconciliation

Over this past year, more attention has rightfully been brought to Indigenous history and the way that Indigenous people are still impacted by Canada's colonial legacy. By rethinking Canada day, observing National Day For Truth and Reconciliation and talking more openly about the trauma of residential schools, young Canadians are calling for education and awareness around what Indigenous reconciliation looks like. This is an opportunity for our generation to be the change we want to see, and it's important that we see this change is supported by organizations of power and influence.



THE IMPACT OF YOUTH-LED RESEARCH: TALKING WITH YOUNG ONTARIANS UNITED

When the pandemic first hit, university students Katelyn Wang and Terence D'Souza noticed a disconnect between young people and decision-making entities. With the goal of bridging this gap, the pair founded Young Ontarians United, a youth-led research organization. In August 2021, Young Ontarians United published *Hopeful Resilience*, a youth-led research report that surveyed 500 youth across Ontario to understand how education, employment, health and communities have been impacted by the pandemic. Researchers encouraged youth from all over the province to take part and provided constructive workshops where young people could suggest solutions to the problems they're facing. With its findings, the report incorporates suggestions on how institutions of power can change their practices to be more inviting to young Canadians. Katelyn and Terence chatted with Youth Friendly about ethical research methods, how to meaningfully engage youth and important takeaways from their report.

What inspired you to found Young Ontarians United?

Terence: Young Ontarians United was built to connect young people's opinions and concerns back to the decisions that directly affect them. A lot of young people were being impacted in different ways during the pandemic, but their opinions were not being brought to light. That's when we talked about creating this back and forth where we can connect young people's voices with government and other systems and institutions. That sparked the conversation around youth-led research, which is what we do now. We're focused on bringing forth the concerns of young people on a whole host of issues and across different communities.

How do you approach your research to make it ethical?

Katelyn: Part of ensuring equitable research is understanding the limitations of your own experiences and perspectives, and being open to co-design your research methodology, instead of having a strict, inflexible approach. There's so much about youth lived experiences in Ontario that we have no idea about. So we conducted dozens of consultations with youth with lived experiences in order to get an understanding of the issues affecting them in the pandemic. We also asked them about how they would design this project if they were conducting it. From there, we were able to get a better understanding of how to form our survey. We also tried to focus on accessibility. For an organization with limited capacity, it's difficult to be able to accommodate things that usually require a lot of funding, like translators. But we tried to ensure that it was a priority, and if anybody needed those sorts of accommodations, we would strive to get it for them.

What kind of outlook do you think young people have about democratic involvement and civic participation?

Katelyn: I think a lot of youth want to be more involved with civic processes and with designing policy. They want their voices to be heard, but they feel like even when they advocate for the things they need in their communities, nothing really changes.

Terence: There is this increasing amount of apathy within young people, especially during the pandemic, not just to get involved in democracy, but to get involved in their community period. Because you have isolation and all the mental health challenges that come with that, on top of the abuse or neglect that young people face in their own spaces because of their lived experiences. Our solution to building out of that was to strengthen the community online.

Why is there a lack of trust between organizations and young people?

Katelyn: I think there are a few reasons, but if I were to pin it down to just a couple, I would say, firstly, institutions that are very powerful often act unilaterally, and not with consideration of youth concerns. That makes youth feel like their identities and their existence doesn't matter to these larger organizations or institutions. Secondly, I think it's a lack of empathy. In the education system, for example, a lot of youth were expressing to us that they know that educators are going through a lot of stress having to translate education online, but they were disappointed at the lack of compassion and empathy that teachers were having for students. Students are all equally feeling the frustration, sadness, anxiety, and loneliness during this time.

Terence: I think a lot of the distrust traces back to typical research. In the past, research has never been that inclusive of young people, and especially young people of marginalized

identities. Extractive research is where researchers go into communities and try to get every little piece of information possible for their academia, and then just leave, without actually giving the community a space to heal or deal with those issues. Traditional extractive research methods have been traumatizing for young people.

How do you think having this research will improve youth engagement in the future?

Terence: Organizations should implement the recommendations that we have in our report, while also making sure that they have young people involved in their systems. If young people were a part of these teams from the very beginning, we wouldn't need this sort of work being done. So really, this youth-led research is about bridging the gaps of youth engagement by young people pointing out the problems and outlining the solutions.

Katelyn: The pandemic was a traumatizing experience, but I think that it presents a very unique opportunity to be able to build back better. We want to redefine a better normal that's more inclusive, more equitable and better for everybody. Something unique about our research project was that we couldn't do it on our own. We were able to accomplish as much as we did because we built a network of all these other organizations and individuals that had the same goals of realizing a better future. We have the work of so many organizations that helped support our research to thank in part for how amazing the report turned out. By collaborating with partner organizations, and being able to provide the empirical reasoning and backing for new programming and new implementations, that's how we can actually realize the solutions outlined in our report, and thereby improve youth engagement.

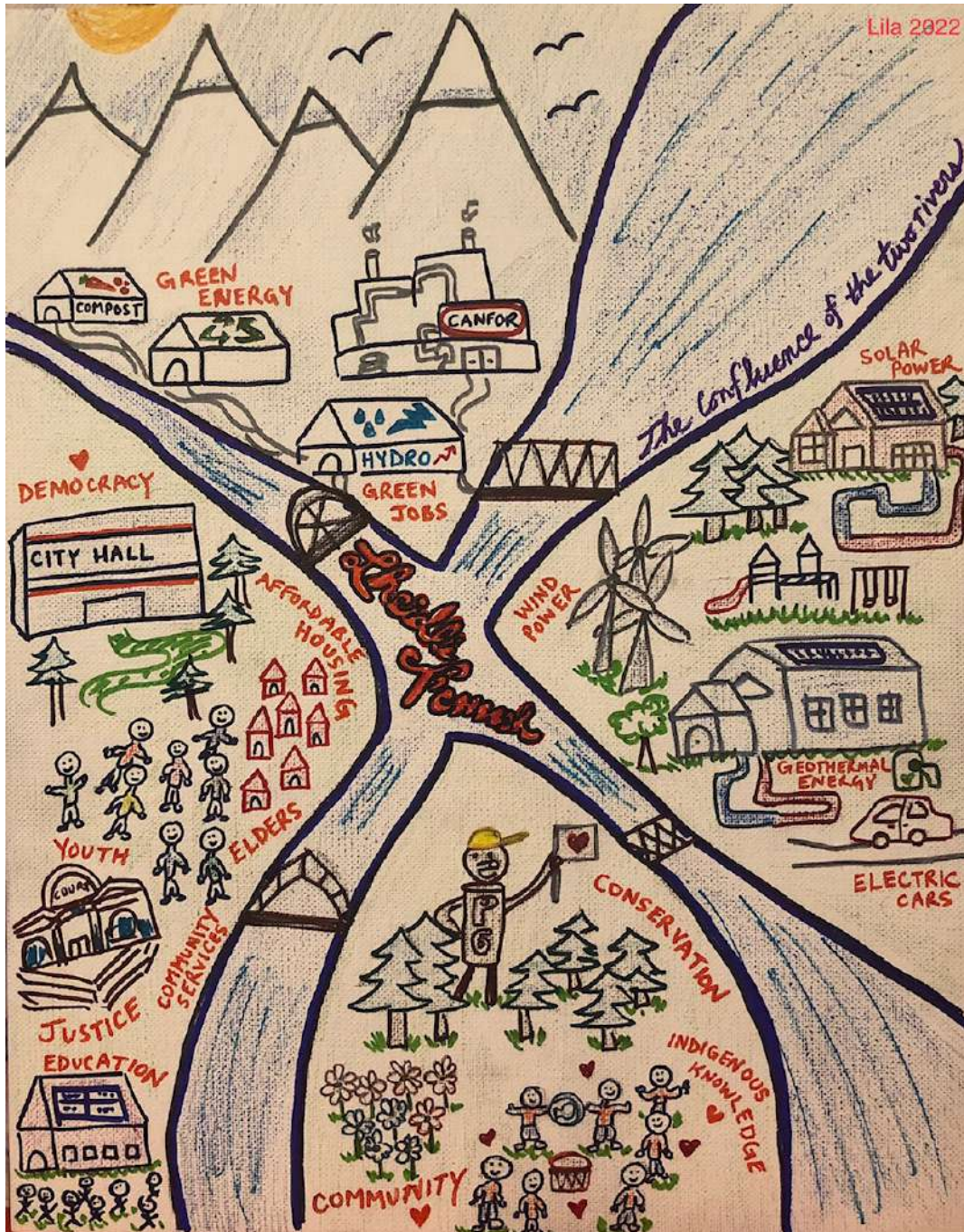
What kind of practices can organizations implement to meaningfully engage youth?

Terence: Youth councils can be great. But if you are going to create a council, say to youth from the very beginning, "This is your council, you decide what you want to do with it." Make that commitment in public before the application stage happens. Another thing that's really good is periodically engaging a different group of young people each time you need advice. You can hold frequent engagements and call in groups of young people who are representative of different marginalized identities. Call them to a consultation, and make sure that you're adequately compensating them. In all cases, please try to make the information public. Make all your learnings public and make all of these discussions public — it's a way for organizations to hold themselves accountable.

Katelyn: Value the opinions and the perspectives of young people. Young people have value, they have things to say, they have informed opinions that aren't just baseless things that can be written off. Sometimes young people go into an organization and offer an idea, and the organization just ends up doing their own thing. And then they'll say, "We consulted youth," but the idea that they end up implementing has nothing to do with what the youth generated. On a more institutional level, focus on hiring younger people, and having that representation. Those opportunities for growth and experience building are really important. So maybe having even youth-reserved positions on boards, and having focused hiring that emphasizes that younger people who apply will be considered equally.

You can read Young Ontarians United's Hopeful Resilience report at youngontariansunited.org/hopefulresilience.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.



LILA MANSOUR

Artist Bio

Lila Mansour is a young Canadian Muslim of Syrian origin. She grew up in Prince George and in 2021, she graduated as valedictorian from the University of Northern British Columbia. She is passionate about social justice and building equitable communities. Lila began her degree in law this autumn at the Lincoln Alexander School of Law in Toronto.

Title of submission

Reimagined: A Confluence of Two Rivers

I grew up on the unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation in Northern BC. "Lheidli" means "The People from the Confluence of the River" in the Carrier language, referring to where the Nechako River meets the Fraser River and their traditional territory. In this piece of art, I wanted to reimagine what my community would look like if it were more equitable, democratic, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. Now is the opportunity to work with Indigenous communities rebuild our cities, invest in our youth, make affordable housing accessible, decolonize our governance and education systems, and transition to greener energy sources.



YOUTH-LED DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION QUIZ: WHICH ROLE BEST SUITS YOU?

Political participation among youth is shifting. Young people are increasingly abandoning formal modes of political participation and adopting grassroots-level action. Youth Friendly thinks of youth engagement through the concept of Youth-Led Democratic Innovation (YLDI): a framework that combines individual action, grassroots community projects and large-scale mobilization in partnership with governmental institutions and civil society organizations.

YLDI provides the flexibility for young people to engage in ways that they feel are appropriate and that they have the capacity for. It supports the idea that one form of participation is not superior to the other; all are potential entry points into democratic participation. In turn, it makes it easier for youth to get involved and see the direct impacts of their actions.

YLDI follows the framework that there are three fundamental roles that make up the success of social movements: movement leaders, creative organizers and decision-makers. In order to support youth in this framework, it helps to know what mode of youth-led democratic innovation best suits you. Take this fun quiz and find out!

What is your outlook on using social media to raise awareness for important topics?

- a) I'm comfortable with it!
- b) I'd rather form connections in person.
- c) I'm less focused on outreach and education and more focused on making decisions about the issue at hand.

Do you feel comfortable fostering space for debates?

- a) Definitely!
- b) Not so much. I'd rather facilitate brainstorming sessions.
- c) Yes, but only if the debate leads to important decisions being made.

Do you like planning and organizing initiatives?

- a) I'd rather take part in an event than lead it.
- b) Yes - I love using my creative side to plan events.
- c) I'm more comfortable collaborating with others than planning an event myself.

What's your outlook on making big decisions about pressing issues?

- a) Not my thing - I'd rather raise awareness.
- b) I'm more concerned about collaborating with people to enact small-scale changes.
- c) I thrive when I'm given the chance to make meaningful decisions that affect me, my peers and my community.

In your opinion, the best way to achieve long-term systemic change is by:

- a) Raising awareness about hot-topic social and political issues through discussion.
- b) Developing and fostering strong community networks.
- c) Making decisions that impact communities at large.

You believe the most effective way to engage youth is through:

- a) Social media.
- b) Facilitating group meetings where youth can come together to share ideas.
- c) Inviting youth to decision-making spaces where their input is genuinely valued.

You encourage institutional engagement by:

- a) Fostering creative and imaginative activities to get conversations started.
- b) Coming up with problem-solving strategies to tackle important issues.
- c) A mix of both.

When it comes to democratic engagement, you are more likely to:

- a) Point out inequalities or social injustices and spread awareness about them.
- b) Look at how you can address a problem on a smaller level and come up with creative problem-solving approaches.
- c) Taking into consideration the problem and the proposed solutions, you think about how to enact change on a bigger scale and a long-term impact.

Mostly As: Movement Leaders

You identify most with the YDLI Movement Leaders mode. This allows youth to instigate and participate in collective action as a way of developing strong and lasting political identities. This represents youth who use their voices and platforms to spark public dialogue about an issue. It often takes the form of digital participation where the internet, social media and mobile technology are used to inform young people about social issues. To engage this mode of YDLI, you can use networks (social media or in-person) to facilitate dialogue and get youth involved.

Mostly Bs: Creative Organizers

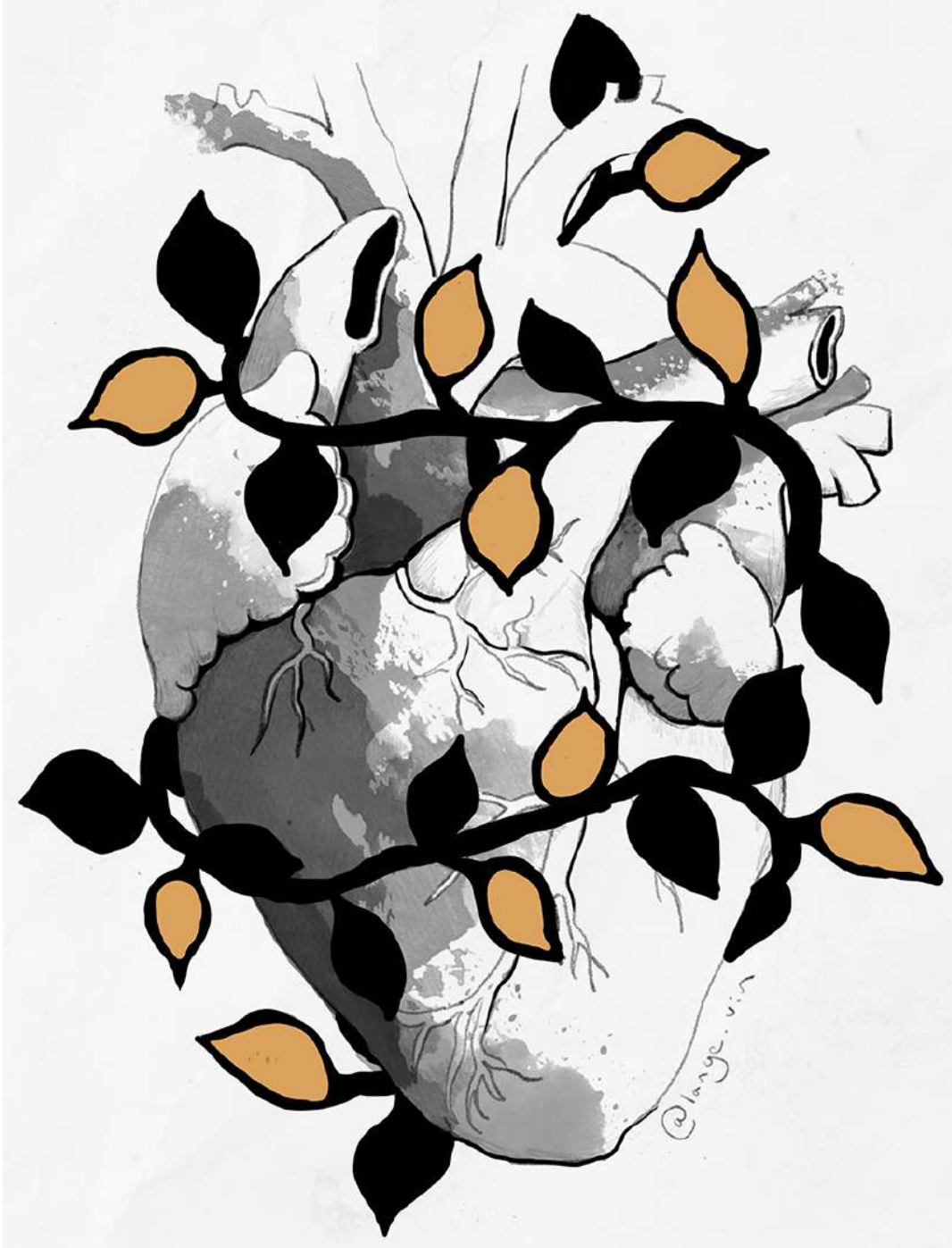
You identify most with the YDLI mode of Creative Organizers. This is when young people determine what issues to focus on and address them in their own way using community networks and creativity. It involves youth-led projects, organizations, co-management, and often young people working with adults jointly to develop initiatives. You can directly help youth get involved as community organizers by providing necessary resources and funding for youth-led organizations/initiatives to get off the ground. This means providing a meeting space and/or coordinating with other organizations that are safe spaces for youth. While this mode highlights the importance of adult participation, remember to let youth take the lead.

Mostly Cs: Decision Makers

You identify most with the YDLI mode of Decision Makers. This is where young people make meaningful and substantive decisions that affect themselves, their peers and their communities. This mode requires a shift in dynamics between youth and adults from a relationship of guidance and support to one where power is shared. This mode recognizes the power of young people in democratic engagement. You can make space for youth to be decision-makers by inviting them to the table and encouraging their participation. Give youth decision-making power and understand that what they have to say is valuable.







REBECCA LACROIX (LANGEVIN)

Artist Bio

Rebecca Lacroix (Langevin) is a queer French-Canadian, Toronto-based illustrator. A designer by trade, Rebecca uses digital linework, watercolour and brushwork to depict figures and identities often overlooked in our society.

Supplanting the traditional male gaze of the art world, Rebecca's work focuses on capturing these overlooked women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, documenting them through a uniquely queer and female gaze.

Artist Statement

Poison Heart (2020) Digital Illustration, 20x20

I began this piece as an introspective study of Catholic symbols of my upbringing. The Sacred Heart is a devotion meant to represent Jesus; actual heart and his love of all humanity. This symbol has often held contradictory feelings for me, as my lived experience as a queer person in and around the catholic church has not been one met with this sacred love. Here I have reinterpreted this symbol to better represent the love and community I have found for myself outside of Catholicism.



YOUTH OP-ED

Navigating the Youth Friendly Environment

By Natalie Chu

As a young person, I find that a lot of things are out of our control. We are often managed and supervised by others who control what we do, what jobs we get, and what schools we are accepted into. And not only are there a plethora of opportunities that are seemingly at our fingertips, but there are so many others who are vying for the same opportunities. Rejection from positions is plentiful, and it can beat us down when it happens over and over again.

But when we finally get a hold of an opportunity, it is like discovering gold. Maybe that is why posting about job and school acceptances on LinkedIn is so popular. Not because we want to sound pretentious, but because we want to celebrate the people out there who finally gave us an opportunity when so many others had rejected our applications.

Being a youth within a youth friendly environment is like being taught how to drive a car. To be taught, there must be mentors who guide, support, and champion youth development by giving youth control over important and meaningful matters. Being a mentor is like being in the passenger's seat with a driver possessing a learner's permit. There is an inherent risk and expense that comes with giving control to someone who has less experience. It can almost seem like it is not worth it. But for all the current mentors and changemakers, there also exists someone who helped them get to where they are now.

A youth friendly environment ensures a cycle that supports youth in becoming the best versions of themselves. When youth are trusted with power, we gain access to valuable experiences, opportunities and resources that allow us to innovate, develop, and inspire lasting change on causes that we care about. Given the right opportunities, we can turn into the positive mentors that take a chance on the next generation of youth and continue the cycle of empowerment that sustains a youth friendly environment.

Giving youth control over decisions that inspire significant changes can be daunting and a big responsibility that we often don't feel ready for. While most of us are no strangers to working hard and striving towards positive change, our efforts are often stifled by the prospect of making mistakes and not being perfect. Navigating a youth friendly environment does not entail an easy journey, but rather one that we must work through with support from both our personal and professional networks.

They say that young people are the future most likely because, well, we have a lot of the future to look forward to. Therefore, it is imperative that opportunities for youth to be in the driver's seat continue to be created while having a mentor providing guidance from the passenger's side. While daunting, navigating the youth friendly environment as a youth gives us the chance to gain valuable experiences that impact the rest of our lives.

**Let's continue to navigate
the youth friendly environment together.**



REBECCA MICHIE

Artist Bio

Rebecca Suzanne Michie is an OCAD University graduate having majored in Illustration with a minor in Printmaking. She is passionate about allegorical expressions of the female, particularly in ancient folk myth, legend and religion. Exploring themes of sisterhood, patriarchy and ancestral legacy, she works mostly in oil paint and relief print. Through her work she examines folk stories of the past through a modern lens in order to bring forth a unique perspective on the power of femininity and the human experience.

Artist Statement

Prove It On Me Blues

Prove It On Me Blues, by Ma Rainey depicts secret moments of discretionary lesbian love. The singer teases us singing, «They say I do it, ain't nobody caught me. Sure got to prove it on me.»



SPOTLIGHTING YOUNG LEADERS: FUTURE ANCESTORS SERVICES

Young people are often driving forces for meaningful change. And when they come together over a collective cause to form youth-led organizations, they can make impacts on a systemic level. Building and operating youth-led structures often involves re-imagining what it means to run an organization because young people don't see their values reflected in current governing and operating structures. This yields innovative engagement and stronger connections to communities. Alberta-based organization Future Ancestors Services is a prime example of how youth-led organizations can reshape how we think about generational relations and connections to the world around us.

Future Ancestors Services is an Indigenous and Black-owned, youth-led social enterprise that works with clients to help shape a better future by confronting systemic barriers and advancing climate justice. Working with an intergenerational team of professionals and advisors, the organization provides speaking, training, research, consulting, and social media services — exploring teachings of anti-racism, climate justice, and decolonized ways of being.

While centring on Indigenized practices, the organization supports its clients in addressing systemic issues that harm marginalized communities, connections to land, and the overall well-being of the Earth. As an organization that is informed by Indigenous teachings, their services are rooted in accessibility, anti-ageism, and anti-racism.

In addition to working with clients, Future Ancestors seeks to support their communities directly through two developed initiatives. Firstly, Future Ancestors Constellation is a digital database that promotes the work of service deliverers that would be their expected competitors. Secondly, the organization has developed the Waashayshkwun Grant Fund, which provides funding for Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+, and disabled independent service providers who are working to advance climate justice and systemic barrier removal in Canada.

Future Ancestors Services collaborates with a network of older advisors and professionals, and operates through a lens of what they call “ancestral accountability”. What does this mean, exactly? There’s no one definition of ancestral accountability, says Chúk Odenigbo, Founding Director and Director of Ancestral Services, which is why they love the term. As future ancestors, the organization states it is important to understand and collaborate with older generations. “Being a future ancestor requires connection with one’s personal ancestors, with one’s collective ancestors, but also with the original caregivers of the lands that one occupies, and their ancestors,” says Chúk. “By doing so, we seek to understand their actions and inactions and make the connection to how our realities today have been shaped.”

Recognizing the history helps the organization to have a better understanding of how their current actions may mould the lives of future generations. It’s a way of staying in touch with the Earth and its past occupants and creating a culture of accountability.

Future Ancestors Services is not only youth-led but led by youth who are racialized or otherwise marginalized. Being led by youth with intersecting identities informs the way Future Ancestors operates, as the team prioritizes relationships with their communities in their work with clients. Simply put, their method of community-based operations prioritizes willingness to learn and unlearn. “Being youth-led means that we are adaptable and open to growth. It means that we recognize that we don’t have it all figured out yet, but we are trying,” says Chuk. “It means continuously learning while being unwavering in our desire to change the world. It means being hopeful even in the face of despair. Being youth-led means we have the capacity to dream, and so we do just that: dream.”

Through a culture of collaboration, honesty and eagerness to learn, Future Ancestors Services is able to connect multiple generations to work together on bettering the world, thus creating a more equitable future for young people.

Learn more about Future Ancestors Services at futureancestors.ca.





ISABELLE DUFRESNE-LIENERT

Artist Bio

Isabelle has been implicated for 7 years now in the Scout movement. She's currently working as the Sustainability Education Program Coordinator and supports other youth in realizing their own community projects on social justice. Artist at heart through a College degree, she has embarked on a different journey to pursue higher education in International Development and Public Administration. Isabelle is passionate about youth engagement and public policy ... and of maple syrup!

IG : @whenisabelle

Artist Statement

My artwork is on the theme of youth community development. Here I present to you three youth who are mapping out their community in order to better understand what is within it, to ultimately, as youth, find ways to positively impact it. This is the beginning of a conversation, of an opportunity, a desire for action. This artwork is inspired by a group of young scouts who are working on a project against overpackaging.

SUBMISSIONS FROM YOUTH ABOUT WHAT RECOVERY LOOKS LIKE

What does COVID-19 recovery look like to a young person in Canada?

We know that COVID-19 exposed cracks in current social and economic systems. In these spaces created by the pandemic, we also got to pause some of the control capitalism has over our lives. In these spaces, in different forms, we caught glimpses of something else. Something hopeful. Something compassionate. Something transformative. More than the popular Just Recovery, this is an opportunity to take these spaces and build in them, creating something of substance in the hollow gaps left by this extractive economic model. We need those crucial policies – investment in good, green jobs and an end to harmful subsidies to fossil fuels and the 1% - but there's a deeper transformation that's needed, too. A cultural shift away from consumption, individualism and domination, and towards regenerative, reciprocal and compassionate ways of relating to one another and the Earth. The pandemic has opened these spaces, and I hope that we can bring these better ways of being forward into the recovery from the pandemic (and from so many other forms of violence that have been the norm for so long). I don't know about you, but I am ready to build something better and live in that world that could be.

Kelly Gingrich (age 25)

As a young person in Canada, there were many things I felt like I lost at the beginning of COVID-19. I lost the opportunity to go out and create new memories with friends and family, gather and engage with my community members, and experience all that is available to someone in her early career. However, nearly two years after the start of the pandemic, there came a point when I realized the future has more to gain from COVID-19 than what we have lost to it. I consider that shift in mindset within myself as an example of what COVID-19 recovery can look like. I gained an appreciation for the things I once took for granted, an understanding of how digital developments can expand access to diverse programs, and a desire to encourage the emergence of new workplace cultures. I believe COVID-19 recovery in Canada will be beyond just a physical or economic recovery; it will be about feeling hopeful and optimistic about change instead of fearing the post-pandemic uncertainty. The world we once knew is not the world we will soon know—and I couldn't be more excited to see what it will bring.

Angelica Ng





PRISCILLA OJOMU

Artist Statement

My artwork is a reflection piece made while pondering on my goals for the new year. I see myself on a mission, and some of it entails fighting for human rights, educating and empowering myself/others, taking care of myself, staying connected with friends and family, prioritizing rest and leisure activities, and so on. Creating this serves as a reminder of the many things I value, and as a Black woman living in these times, I aim to stay focused on my journey, do things that spark joy, and give back to my community.



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