



SHARING OUR STORIES: A PORTRAIT OF FIRST NATIONS YOUTH VOICES



» Profile of survey participants

This consultation was conducted with First Nations youth in Quebec from April to November 2020, and had the objective of making the voices of young people heard. By focusing more closely on the journeys, experiences, needs, priorities, values and sensitivities of First Nations youth, we want to draw a more accurate picture of their realities and priorities. This process will inform the action plan of the First Nations Quebec-Labrador Youth Network (FNQLYN) and allow its transition to an independent organization. The consultation was carried out in collaboration with the Youth Network Chair (Chaire-Réseau jeunesse or CRJ) as part of the renewal of Indigenous youth strategies within the 2030 Quebec Youth Policy.

The results shed light on certain aspects of First Nations youth voices, and the spaces of expression and mechanisms offered or to be developed to provide them with appropriate support.

Respondents come from the 10 First Nations in Quebec, they are between

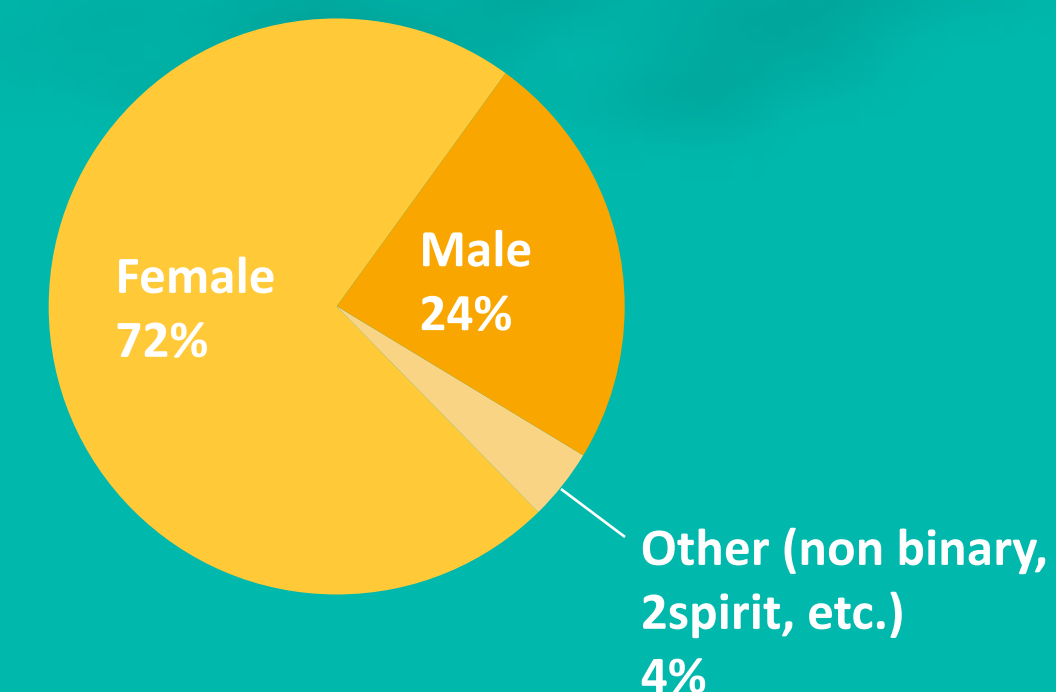
15 AND 35 YEARS OF AGE

72% are women

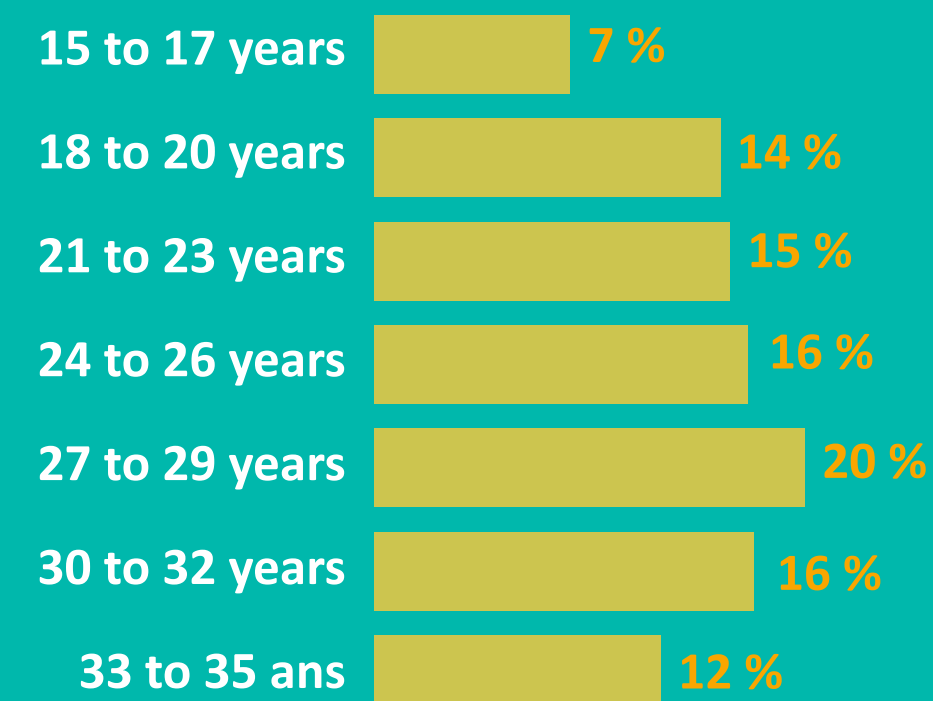
20% say they belong to the 2S-LGBTQ+ community

45% live in the community

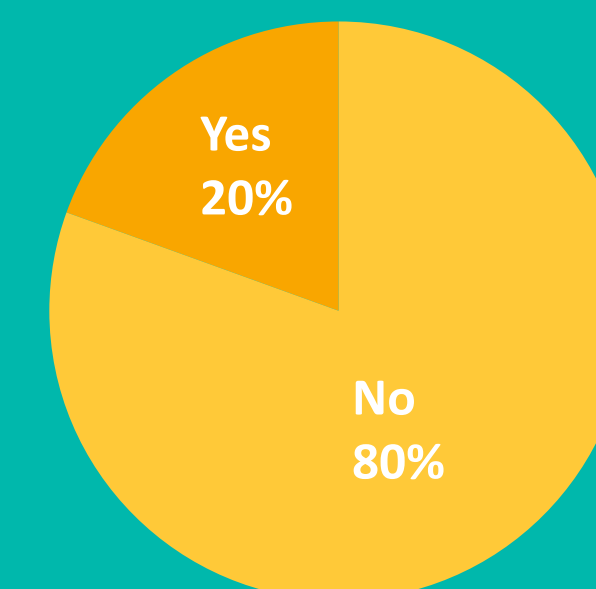
Gender identity



Age of respondents



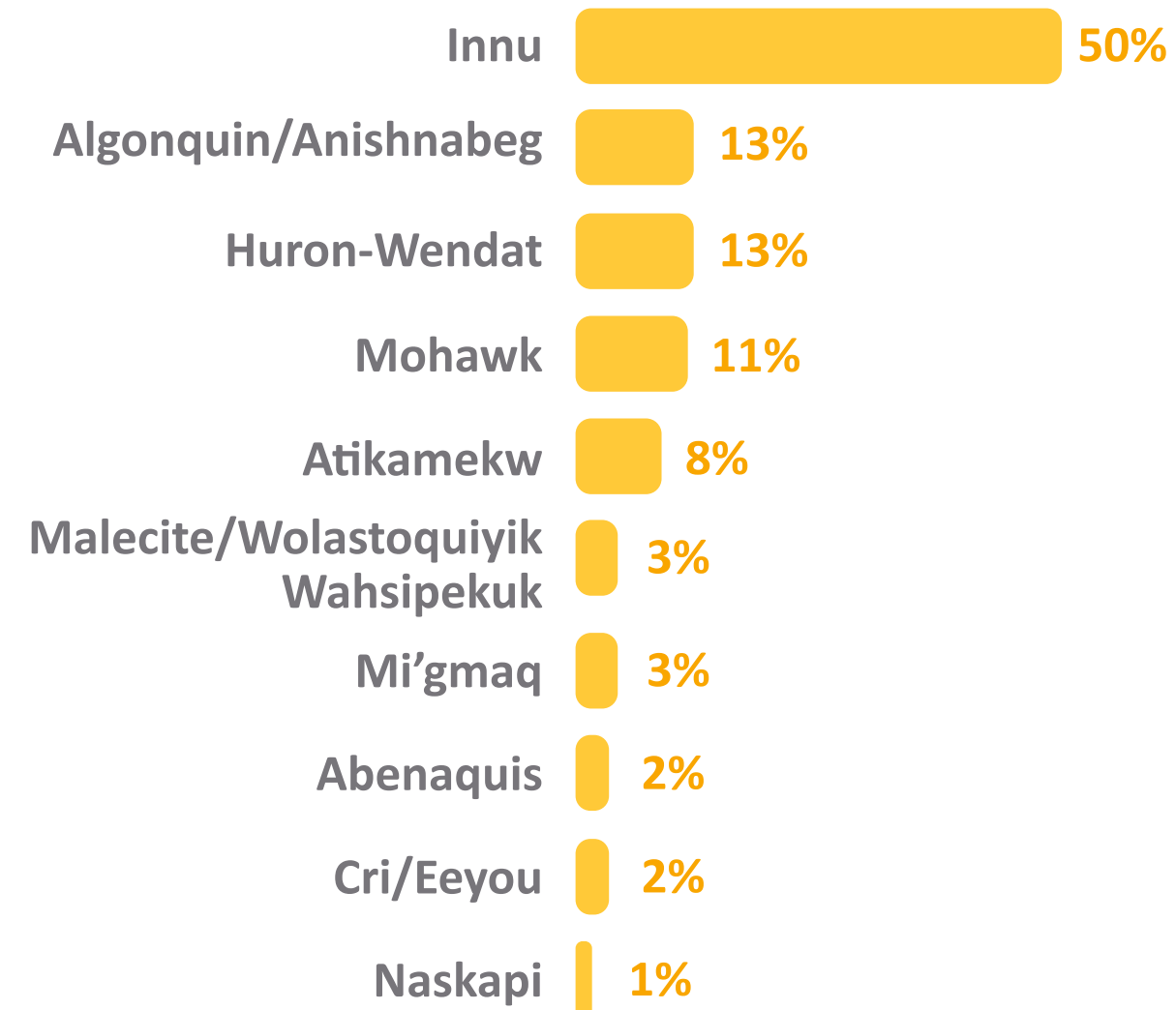
Belonging to LGBTQ2+ community



227 YOUTH RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY AND 25 YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN 5 VIRTUAL FOCUS GROUPS.

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Nation(s)



➤ A portrait of youth voices

Young people characterize their voices as hopeful, healing, passionate, and as a vehicle for change. However, the young people we met said that their voices are not sufficiently valued.

96%

are proud to
be part of their
Nation

86%

say they have the
necessary knowledge
to express
themselves or to give
their opinion

81%

feel affected by
the priorities of
their communities
and their
environments

58%

of respondents say
youth have
leadership

80%

have enough
confidence to express
themselves or to give
their opinion

35%

of respondents say that
they **do not feel involved** in
the decisions of their
communities or their
environments

Call it naivety, call it hope...but we have passion, and we are ready to push for our well-being...Our voice is sometimes restricted, but when it comes out, it's incredible! -Mi'gmaq

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➤ Listening

Respondents feel listened to by their loved ones:



93% by friends

87% by family

76% in academic and professional contexts

66% by Elders

Young people perceive intervention settings and political spaces in a completely different way.

47% of young people feel listened to by social workers

25% feel listened to by political decision-makers

7% feel strongly listened to by community leaders, advisors and decision-makers

There is a connection between feeling listened to and feeling supported in one's community in the expression:

51% of youth feel totally or somewhat listened to in their community or setting.



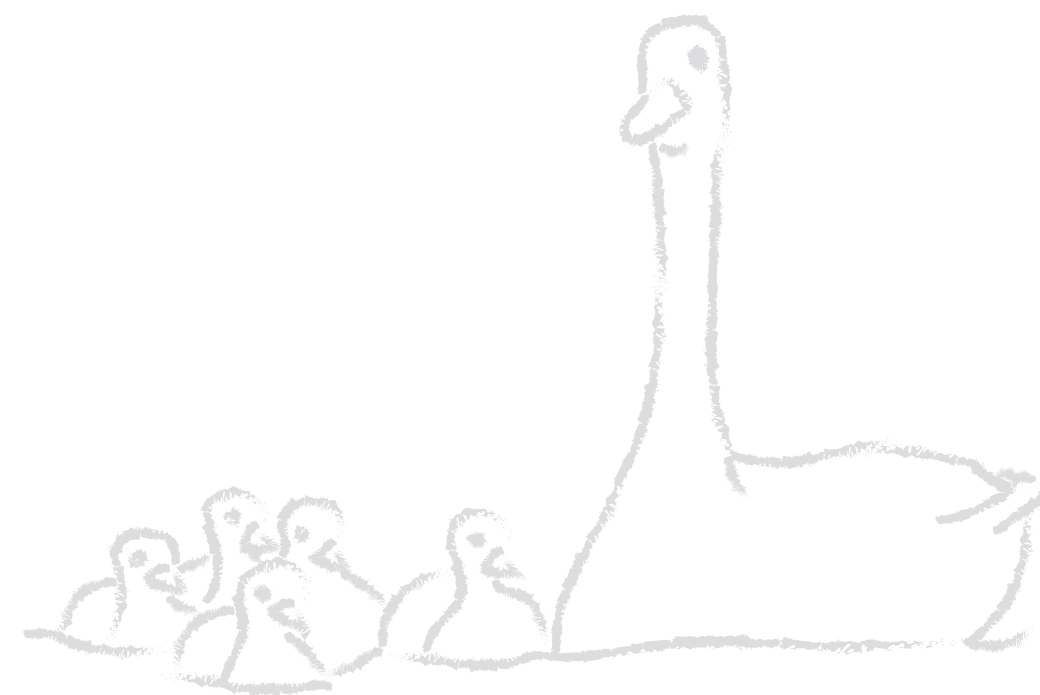
Of this number:

82% feel that young people are encouraged to give their opinion

78% think their needs are being considered

79% feel their voice has an influence

61% believe that youth have leadership



Young people sometimes feel instrumentalized by certain actors. They have few opportunities to participate actively in formal decision-making bodies.

Youth voices do not have much influence on the political life of the community or on "mainstream" politics. - Innu

Young people make a distinction between being listened to and being heard.

You know, I feel that mechanisms and committees are sometimes implemented [...], but at the end of the day, will what you say really have an impact on band council decisions, for example? [...] We're a bit jaded. -Innu

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» Spaces and forms of expression

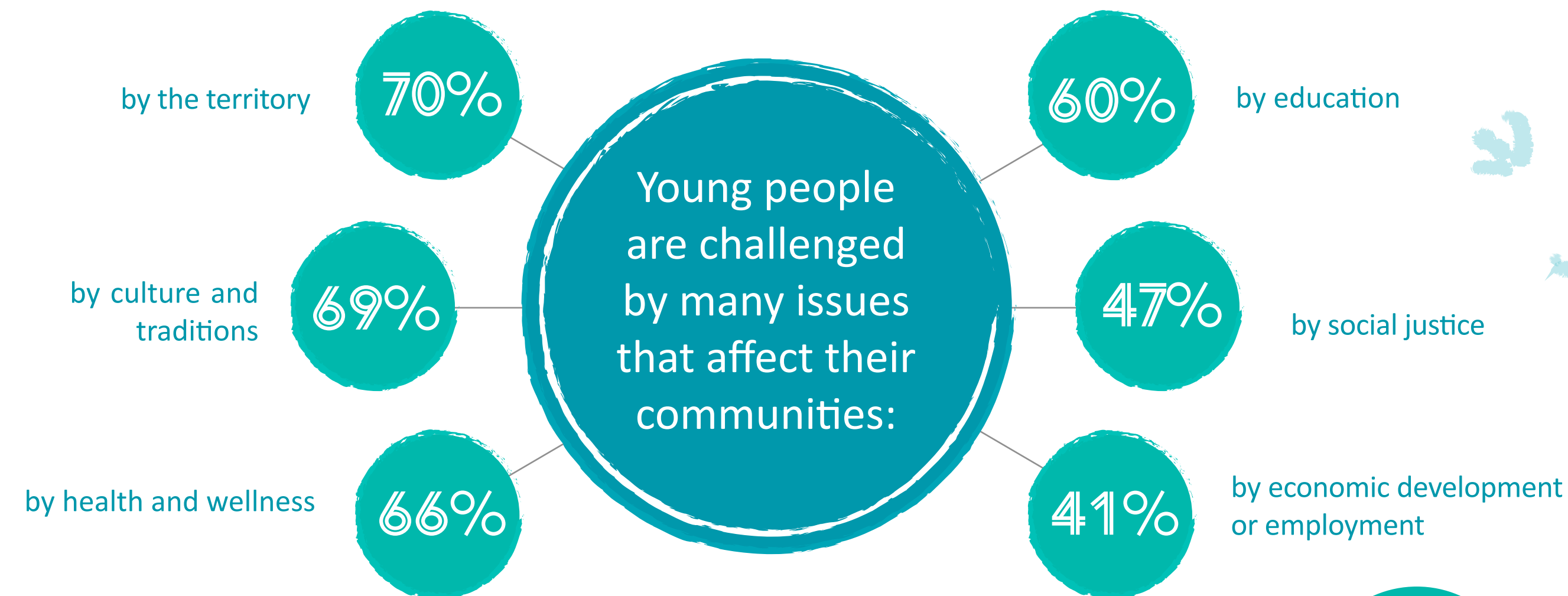


Yes, that's basically what social networks are all about...because that's where they come from, that's where I think [they] built their own world as they see it. So that's where they feel good. The sense of belonging is there. -Innu

[Gatherings] are often an opportunity to meet and socialize together, and events aren't necessarily always formal, they are also very informal. -Innu

For me, it's through art. It has been a way for me to reconnect. -Innu-Atikamekw

When we consider all the political issues, whether on housing, culture or just politics, well, youth voices are important in all these categories. -Atikamekw



Standard political spaces of expression are not sufficiently adapted to the achievements, values and identities of First Nations youth.

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➤ Barriers

Four barriers affect the experiences of young people:

46% of respondents do not know who to speak to in order to express their opinions

46% find spaces of expression intimidating or stressful

45% have difficulty expressing their ideas

45% report a lack of self-confidence

Youth affected by mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression, etc.) feel less involved in decision-making processes.

Because we are not sufficiently asked or given the means to express ourselves. Youth lose their lives due to mental illness and neglect, but they are looked down on for not doing enough. -Mohawk

Opportunities for expression in some settings appear to be related to the availability of spaces and support networks:

46% of respondents have difficulty expressing themselves because they do not know who to talk to.

Of these respondents:

56% also have difficulty expressing themselves in intergenerational circles

61% also have difficulty expressing themselves in a work or school setting

52% also have difficulty expressing themselves in political bodies

55% live outside the community

Young people feel that they are less listened to and less legitimate in the eyes of adults because of their young age, lack of education, urbanity and complex identity.

I'm not taken seriously because I don't speak Anicinabemowin or because I talk like a white person. I'm afraid I won't be seen as Indigenous enough because my father is white. - Anishnabeg

The structure of political bodies is often mentioned as a barrier for young people. They describe these formal decision-making spaces as rigid, intimidating, symbolic and exclusive.



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» The Future

Youth want to make their voices heard for many reasons:

- To improve their communities
- To support future generations
- To raise awareness about the history of First Nations
- To share their experiences

A space that fosters the expression of First Nations youth should:

- ✓ Allow for a sense of comfort, cultural security and inclusion
- ✓ Be a place where youth feel a sense of belonging
- ✓ Be free from judgment against others
- ✓ Be youth-led and youth-built
- ✓ Be a space of valorisation, which fosters pride, training and sharing between youth and with Elders.
- ✓ Be a fluid/flexible space that encourages informal discussions

For young people, their voice:

- Expresses youth strength, both in numbers and in original ideas
- Is the voice of the future and of change
- Wants to be listened to and heard as much as adults and Elders
- Helps them build confidence, leadership, and wellness

Six **courses of action** to promote the voice of First Nations youth:

- 1 Value youth, their identity and cultural pride
- 2 Empower youth in decision-making processes
- 3 Develop and adapt various culturally safe platforms for listening, expression and exchange
- 4 Transform spaces of expression and decision-making contexts so that they value traditional methods
- 5 Foster the collective aspect, the plurality of opinions, and networking opportunities
- 6 Strengthen the political and historical knowledge of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth

[In] the Indigenous population, there are many, many young people. There are a lot of beautiful ideas that, unfortunately, don't make it beyond words. And I think that if young people are supported to develop their ideas, it would lead to very beautiful things. -Innu

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