

YOUTH FRIENDLY ENGOS:

Apathy is Boring on reaching, engaging & retaining young people in your organizations

**Presentation to The Sustainability Network
February 11, 2026**

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Apathy is Boring (**Tiohtiá:ke**/Montreal) is situated on the traditional territory of the **Kanien'kehà:ka**, a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations including the Kanien'kehà:ka of the **Haudenosaunee Confederacy**, **Huron/Wendat**, **Abenaki**, and **Anishinaabeg**.

We recognize and respect the Kanien'kehà:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

Agenda

How we'll spend the next hour together!

- Introduction to you & to your facilitators
- The Context
- Research & Evidence
 - Youth Social Values Segments
 - Youth-Led Democratic Innovation
- The Principles of Youth Friendly - In action
- Questions & Survey
- Check-out



Our Outcomes for this Session

What to expect:

- Increasing understanding of youth social values segments and the benefits of youth engagement
- Reflecting on Youth Friendly Principles to take to your organizations
- New information to take to your teams :)



WHO ARE WE?

YOUTH FRIENDLY

APATHY IS BORING™



Sydney Penner



Erika De Torres



HOW 'BOUT YOU?

In the chat, let us know your name,
pronouns, where you're calling in from
& what most excites you about this
presentation?

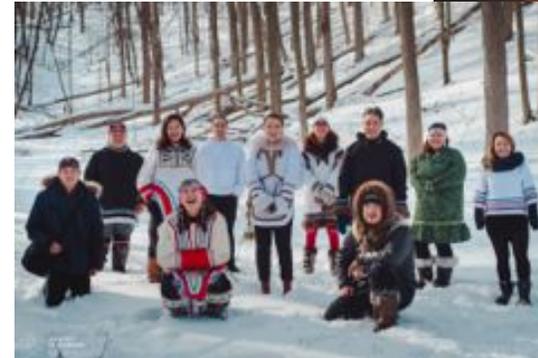
INTENTION SETTING

What is your intention & objective for
being here?

THE CONTEXT

What's going on?

- Our framing & raison d'être:
Democracy
- Our democracy framework:
https://assets.nationbuilder.com/apathyisboring/pages/543/attachments/original/1664219527/Democratic_Framework_PDF_%28English%29.pdf?1664219527
- Youth participation in formal ways (ie: voting, speaking with elected officials) declining
 - Not a decline in engagement, but a shift



Barriers to staying in nonprofits/ngo's (specifically, employed) - Imagine Canada, 2017

- lack of feedback
- lack of clarity around job expectations
- financial considerations
- funding practices significantly contribute to challenges

https://live-imagine-canada.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/2019-06/imaginecanada_youthpaper_en_final.pdf

Volunteering

- In 2018, over 24 million people volunteered, accounting for 79% of Canadians aged 15 and older. (Stats Canada, 2018)
 - Improving job opportunities was cited as a top reason for volunteering among iGens (born after 1996; generation by Statistics Canada), at 38%
- 65% of non-profit organizations are experiencing a shortage of volunteers and intend to recruit (Stats Canada, 2022)
 - "Priorities shifted during the pandemic," said Conway, Volunteer Canada

MODELS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

OLD MODELS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Youth are seen as subjects
that need to be guided,
monitored and controlled
with limited power.

NEW MODELS

Must connect the
participatory activities of
youth to structures of
institutional power.

Research: What do
we know about
today's youth?

“Youth” is not a monolithic identity.

Each generational cohort is made up of diverse social values and identities among youth.

Understanding this allows us at AisB create diverse programs and initiatives that reach as many young people as possible.

What do young people care about?

All respondents (n=2,502). Alpha (n=500); Gen Z (n=2,002)

While the concerns of the two generations differ, cost of living is top of mind for both.

TOP 3 CHOICES

		a	z
The cost of living*	61%	60%	61%
The housing crisis*	31%	22%	34%
Education	21%	36%	17%↓ -13
The environment (climate change and natural disasters)	21%	22%	21%↓ -15
Access to healthcare*	21%	25%	20%
The situation in the United States*	18%	22%	16%
Immigration*	18%	15%	19%
The stock market and the economy	15%	6%	18%↓ -15
Homelessness*	14%	18%	13%
Discrimination and inequality	13%	15%	12%↓ -7
Health crises	13%	9%	14%↓ -22
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict	12%	7%	13%↓ -14
Advances in artificial intelligence	12%	11%	12%↓ -11
Reproductive rights	7%	5%	8%↓ -12

So... How are youth
participating these
days?

The Youth-Led Democratic Innovation Framework



SHAKERS

Examples:

Protest Organizers
Petition Collectors
Movement Leaders



MAKERS

Examples:

Youth Lobbyists
Youth-Led Orgs
Youth Policy Advisors



UPTAKERS

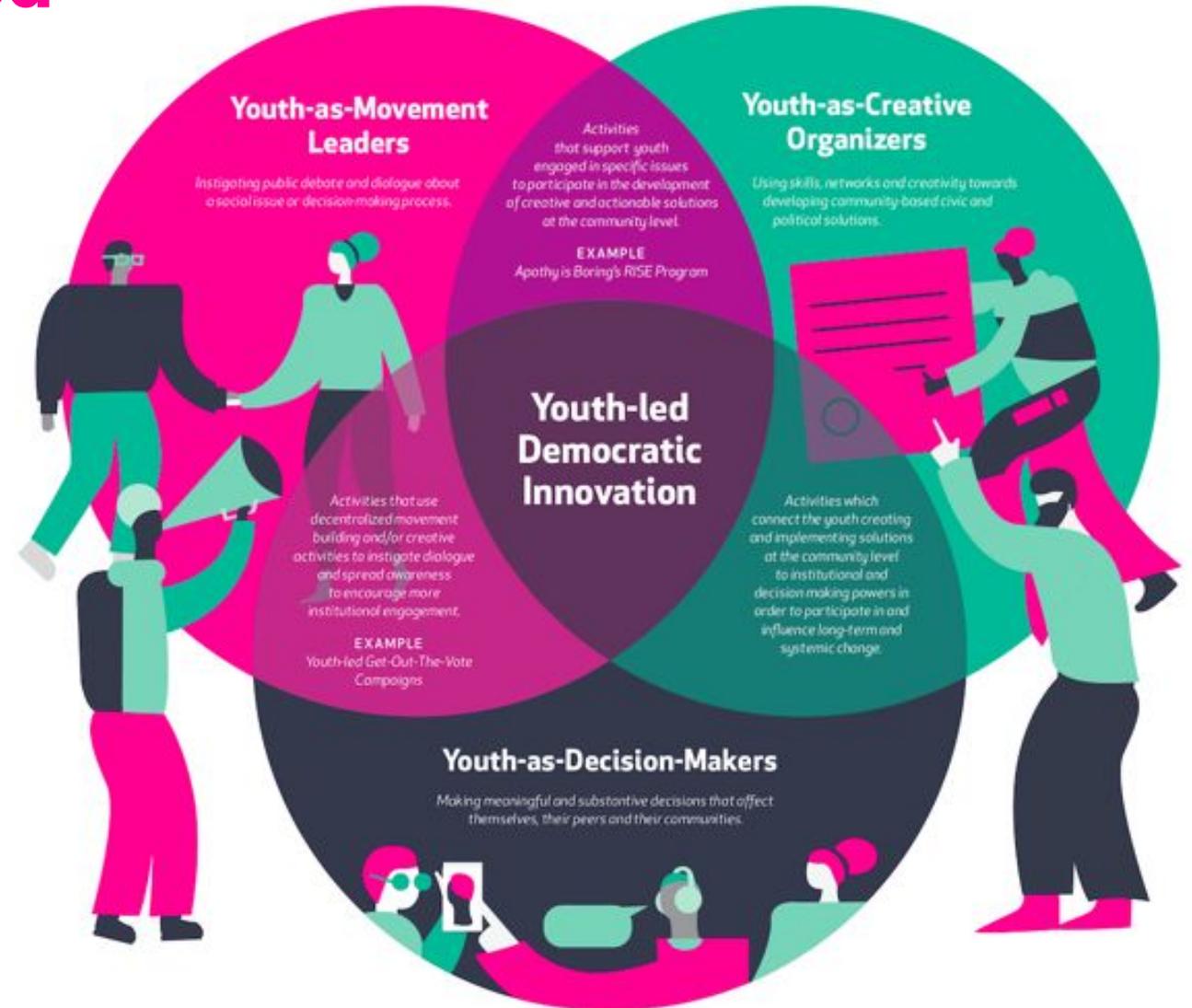
Examples:

School Boards
Workplace Leadership
Governments

The New & Improved Youth-Led Democratic Innovation Framework

People between 15 and 25 years of age display characteristics that are conducive to innovation like being:

- collaborative
- creative
- observant,
- curious
- action-oriented
- visionary



**Do you have any
questions?**

CHANGE MAKING:

What are youth doing
right now?

YOUTH-LED PROJECTS

Thoughtful, community-oriented, passionate

Exploring environmental grief, racism, and mental health through art

Rays to Connect featured art by nine young Montrealers with the theme of resiliency

FRINGE ARTS Kendra Sharp — Published December 6, 2021 3 minutes



Rays to Connect is one of the seven youth-led projects being held across the country. Photo Kendra Sharp

Ambassadors from Montreal-based nonprofit Apathy is Boring hosted an exhibit in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve on Saturday, Dec 4. The exhibit, Rays to Connect, explored themes of environmental grief, mental health and racism relating to the experiences of young Montrealers.



SHADES OF SUSTAINABILITY

is a community project that unpacks what it means to engage in environmental action as Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC). Our goal is to mobilize youth to reconnect with other generations and reimagine sustainability on their own terms.

[LEARN MORE](#)

shindig.zine "Once when I was six, I was shopping with my mom when I asked if I could shop in the boys section, which I had always been drawn to. Even that young, I could feel the enforcement of that invisible, rigid boundary of gender binary - it felt daring and thrilling to ask to cross it.

My mom said yes. This photo captures when I got home - I was so excited about the potential outfits that I laid them out to show off to my family. Though a complicated journey lay ahead of me and it would take a long time to return there, that was an early moment of gender euphoria."

#halifax #halifaxyouth #halifaxnoise #aisbrise #shindig #gendereuphoria

42w

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OPEN WIDE

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND TRANSFORMING SEXUAL HEALTH CARE
 EUGENIA OCHOA + ANITA ROSSAIN
 Season 01, Episode 05
 Listen on Spotify + Anchor

OPEN WIDE

SEXUAL HEALTH CURRICULUM, SETTING BOUNDARIES AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
 KAREN BK CHAN
 Season 01, Episode 05
 Listen on Spotify + Anchor

Ep. 05 Luna Motatas

We're still like yeah, but like how do I get her to eat

OPEN WIDE

Introducing Introducing Introducing

Guest Speaker

Open Wide presents

EPISODE #5

EPISODE #4

Listen now! Link in bio.



YOUTH AS DECISION-MAKERS



PRIME MINISTER'S
YOUTH COUNCIL

Youth Friendly &

You: What can your organization do to be more youth friendly?

The 8 Youth Friendly Principles

1. EMPOWER YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING
2. PRIORITIZE ANTI-OPPRESSION TRAINING AND TOOLS
3. INCORPORATE (CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE) MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT
4. CREATE AND COMMUNICATE THE "SANDBOX" FOR INNOVATION
5. REINFORCE THE VALUE OF THE SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND POWER OF YOUNG PEOPLE
6. WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITMENT: DO THE WORK
7. INCORPORATE FEEDBACK AND BE RESPONSIVE TO YOUTH
8. INTEGRATE AI INTO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WHERE POSSIBLE



1. EMPOWER YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

- Provide youth with access & control
- Help them bring their ideas to life
- Create spaces for them to develop & share their ideas & their skills

Reflection questions:

- How are you empowering youth in decision-making in your spaces?
- Do you make it accessible?
- Are there youth in decision-making roles in your organization?



2. PRIORITIZE ANTI-OPPRESSION TRAINING AND TOOLS

- Youth engagement should center around the diverse lived experiences & barriers they face
- Operate in a framework that creates safe, conscious & open spaces
- Work with the experts to train your staff & continue learning
- Have proper tools & systems to support diverse youth

Reflection Questions:

- How are we supporting our diverse youth?
- Are there opportunities for growth and learning when it comes to creating open spaces for diverse youth?

3. INCORPORATE (CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE) MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT

- Create opportunities for youth to learn and grow in your organization
- Network opportunities with peer-to-peer and intergenerational mentors
- Provide opportunities for youth to become mentors themselves

Reflection Questions:

- Are there mentorship opportunities in your organization?
- How are the mentorship opportunities created?

4. CREATE AND COMMUNICATE THE “SANDBOX” FOR INNOVATION

- Sandbox: Realistic expectations and constraints.
 - What types of resources are available? Is there upward mobility (if working?) What are the expectations?
- Transparency, trust, communication and respect.

Action items to consider:

- In your programs or workplace, are you communicating expectations and constraints clearly?





5. REINFORCE THE VALUE OF THE SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND POWER OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- Lived experiences are just as valuable as formal education or formal training

Reflection Question:

- In your program recruitment or hiring practices, what are you prioritizing? Are you making it easy for diverse youth to participate?



6. WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITMENT: DO THE WORK

- Expect to do a bit of lifting connecting with youth, especially with diverse youth
 - Utilizing resources and tools like social media
 - Connecting with partners and other organizations

Reflection Question:

- Are you in spaces where youth are present? What types of recruitment and outreach strategies do you currently use?

7. INCORPORATE FEEDBACK AND BE RESPONSIVE TO YOUTH

- Using or creating an evaluation & feedback process
 - Continuous check-in (as much as possible!)
- Utilizing the feedback to iterate on your projects or even with job processes
- Providing youth with clear feedback as well

Reflection Questions:

- Are you evaluating your programs and hiring practices, using feedback from youth?

8. ACCEPT THAT AI IS A TOOL THAT YOUTH USE

A nuanced conversation but something that we can't really avoid right now: young people ARE using AI... how can we navigate these conversations together to make sure we're supporting youth in our spaces

Reflection Questions:

- Are the youth in your workplace already using AI? How is it being used, and do you have policies in place for this?

**Join us for the rest
of the series!**

(it was a blast the last couple of
years!)

What's up next

Coming in March 2026: The Youth Friendly Workshop Series

An hands-on, interactive opportunity to learn more about how to become youth friendly. We'll work with you to help your specific organization with:

- **March 10:** Recruiting young people to work with you with Ash and Ashley
- **March 17:** Harnessing the power of social media to engage young people with Aissatou and Lee
- **March 24:** How to retain and continue engaging young people once you've designed your project or initiative with Erika and Irmak

What's up next

LEAF IT TO US! – Youth Friendly Review of YOUR organization

A low-barrier way to see how **your organization is doing when it comes to the Youth Friendly Principles!** We will work with 3 organizations currently participating in the series for a subsidized organizational review.

- We'll work with you to review one aspect of your organization that you're keen to improve on, with a specific focus on the Youth Friendly Principles
- This can be anything from communications, outreach, social media, to programs!
- Previous participants: Green Calgary, the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada, PGPIRG

**Do you have any
questions?**

HELPFUL LINKS

Links we discussed today!:

- [Environics Institute: Social Values Segment Quiz:](https://socialvaluesquiz.environics.ca/)
<https://socialvaluesquiz.environics.ca/>
- [Apathy is Boring's Youth Friendly Principles:](https://www.youthfriendly.com/7-principles)
<https://www.youthfriendly.com/7-principles>
- [Apathy is Boring's Youth Friendly Resources:](https://www.youthfriendly.com/resources)
<https://www.youthfriendly.com/resources>

Your links in the chat! :)

[National Observer on Alexandra Chow](#)

Youth Climate Corps BC:

Webinar Feb 27 with Youth Climate Corps BC Deep Dive Discussion #37 7PM ONLINE

Youth Climate Corps BC is an organization that aims to empower youth to take actions that address the climate crisis. It provides paid work and training to young people in climate action projects that impact their communities.

Help us (*and you*) out by
taking the [post-survey!](https://form.typeform.com/to/SGHaUNNV)

<https://form.typeform.com/to/SGHaUNNV>

**We hope you'll join
us during the
workshop series!**



THANK YOU!

Erika De Torres

erika@apathyisboring.com

Sydney Penner

sydney@apathyisboring.com