

**City of Victoria Youth Council
Presentation to Council, December 15, 2005**

Presenters: Andrew Barrett, Joseph Boutilier, Jessica Verhagen, and coordinator, Chelsea Peddle

CVYC Members: Sheila Hollanders, Caitlin Perry, Adam Bahlke, Emma Bahlke, Cory Boles, Danielle Leduc, Lauryn Morley, Chris Wylie, Jessica Verhagen, Mark, Rayne Hartshorn, Joseph Boutilier, Andrea DiLucca, Hannah Boutilier, Dean Koch, Andrew Barrett, Alexander Barron.

History

The City of Victoria Youth Council (CVYC) is a youth initiated, youth driven project that aims to build a bridge between Victoria's youth and the municipal government. In spring 2004, coordinator Chelsea Peddle brought the idea of the youth council to the City and was given support in principle to begin developing a coalition of youth and stakeholders. There was resounding community support for this initiative and the CVYC and its supporters quickly grew to encompass over 30 youth, community centers, youth-serving organizations, businesses, the GVPL, and schools. The City awarded the CVYC a special projects grant in the summer of 2005. These funds were used to host 6 meetings at which the organizational structure, values and mandate of the CVYC were developed and to hire facilitator Danielle Gauld to train members in anti-oppressive group process.

Since our last presentation to council in July 2005, the CVYC has raised over \$3000 via the *One Man Lord of the Rings* theatrical fundraiser and secured \$16,500 in funds from Coast Capital Savings. The majority of this funding is dedicated to supporting the CVYC coordinator role. We continue to seek out funders to support this position and other projects, as this funding runs out in March 2006. We are also currently working to ensure the sustainability of the CVYC by identifying possible long-term partners and funders.

Current Projects

Since September 2005, we have worked with Anti-dote Racialized Minority and Aboriginal Girls and Women's Network, the Blanshard Community Centre and Volunteer Victoria to create and distribute the 2005 Municipal Youth Survey. The survey will act as an avenue for youth to have their opinions heard by the City of Victoria and to ensure that CVYC's future recommendations to the City will reflect youth opinions. This initiative has also helped us to build relationships with a number of youth and youth serving agencies including IslandKidz, SEXY youth group, AIDS Vancouver Island Queer Peer Education Team, The Intercultural Association youth groups, the James Bay Youth Clinic, the Sierra Club Environmental Youth Council among many others. When the survey is completed, the CVYC will use it's data to create and present a list of recommendations to City Council and embark on specific projects to make Victoria a more youth friendly and socially-just place. We hope to present our findings in February 2006.

CVYC members have attended or given input on a number of City projects/initiatives, most notably by attending the October 31st Consultations on the Victoria Urban Development Agreement. This was an extremely valuable learning experience for CVYC members and we are

thankful to have had the opportunity to be involved in this consultation. CVYC participants are currently writing a reflective report on their involvement in this consultation, which will be forwarded to organizers. The CVYC would like to identify other opportunities for youth members and City Counselors/staff to build personal and working relationships.

The CVYC is excited to announce its role in supporting the development of an Inner City Aboriginal Youth Council hosted in partnership by the Open Door and the Inner City Aboriginal Society. We are excited to be working with UN Messenger of Truth Curtis Clearsky, an internationally renowned hip hop artists and activist, who has agreed to lead the facilitation of this inner city council.

In January, the CVYC will host a meet and greet session. Local youth groups, school councils, community centers and youth-serving agencies will be invited to send youth representatives to attend this networking and planning event. The purpose of the event is to share information about our various groups and communities and to develop a matrix for community organizing and support. We hope this youth-only event will act as the beginnings of a “youth hub”: a municipality wide forum at which youth issues can be regularly discussed and addressed. The unique role of the CVYC will be to funnel relevant information to the ears of City Hall and to act as a guide for youth and municipal officials alike wishing to work in collaboration to address community needs.

Our Relationship with the City

The CVYC sees its role as helping to empower youth by informing them of the different avenues to get their voices heard in the City. We act as an advocate for youth by listening, providing support, and by initiating and encouraging changes. We hope to act as a guide for youth interested in municipal government and for city officials interested in supporting the diverse youth community in Victoria. We want to make Victoria a friendlier and more socially-just place for youth and get input from youth on how to do just that. We may host activities to gather youth input, such as a community forum. Already, we have a website, an Internet forum and have conducted a survey.

Once we’ve gathered information from the youth community, we aim to connect with City Council using a two-way street format: City Counselors and staff can refer issues to the CVYC for input and the CVYC can recommend an issue, concern, or idea for consideration to the City. Our primary liaisons at the City are the Counselor with the youth portfolio and Rob Woodland, City Administrator. The CVYC would like to thank Mr. Woodland and his staff as well as Counselor Dean Fortin for their ongoing support. These liaison roles are of vital importance as they act as City ambassadors and mentors to the youth membership. They are also integral supports for the CVYC coordinator.

In order to ensure the integrity of the relationship, we ask that the City show us how our input has been used (or not used) in a number of ways:

- Clear documentation of CVYC recommendations and business in official meeting minutes, on City’s website and list of advisory committee, in press releases etc.

- Formal letters of receipt and thanks for recommendations from Council/COTW/City departments/committees
- Formal and timely written/verbal follow-up showing explicitly how and why youth council recommendations/activities have influenced (or not influenced) City business/policy/programming
- Personalized letters from the Mayor, Councilors and City staff indicating how youth council recommendations/business have influenced their practice, values, beliefs etc.

The CVYC aims to offer support for City Counselors and staff wishing to connect with Victoria's youth and/or to learn anti-oppressive youth engagement techniques. Please see the attached *Capable Cities in British Columbia: Key Informant Report* (or go to http://growingupincities.ca/english/docs/key_informant_report.pdf) (input from CVYC coordinator is featured in this report).

Our Role in the Community

The CVYC has been providing youth in Victoria with an opportunity to express their ideas on municipal issues through focused, productive meetings and a variety of events. We are dedicated to gaining feedback from youth in our community through forums and initiatives like our 2005 Youth Survey, gathering information on the issues youth face, and presenting possible solutions to the City. It has taken the dedication of many volunteers and the support of many organizations, to build a strong bridge between the youth of Victoria and the City. This bridge is the only existing two-way route between the city and its youth. Without continuing support and proper funding, it will collapse, and without the bridge, our road leads nowhere.

Given the central role the CVYC is now playing in the community, we are looking to secure the long-term sustainability of this project. We have made preliminary contact with Donna Atkinson and are developing a business plan as directed. Please find a first draft attached.

We ask for your moral and financial support in 2006 so that we may continue to provide services, opportunities and solutions for residents in our community and a voice for youth.

We request that City Council:

- a) Designate staff and Counselors to work with the CVYC to address the issues and concerns identified by the CVYC 2005 Youth Survey;
- b) Recognize the integral role the CVYC is playing in connecting youth to the municipality and vice versa by funding a portion of the CVYC annual budget, suggested amount between \$14,000 and \$25,200.

Thank you for your on going support.