

Report on The National Forum 2000 and National Forum Youth during and after the Conference on War-Affected Children

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Canadian Youth Delegation to the International Conference

Heading into Winnipeg, the 50 youth from Canada attending The National Forum in Gimli were divided into two groups, one called the Communications (Media, Outreach) team, and the other the Canadian Youth Delegation. (The report of activities of the Communications group follows the Canadian delegation activities.)

The Canadian Youth Delegation focussed on working with the International Youth to prepare for and attend the Experts Meeting and the Ministerial Meeting.

At this point the program became more formal and more intense for the youth, with less youth-led activities, and more focus on learning what the adult meetings would look like and what the role of youth would be in those meetings. Gail Cockburn and Susan Fountain took over the lead on the Youth Delegation program, with Students Commission focussed on looking after National Forum youth, in the Canadian delegation, as well as the Communications (Media and Outreach) youth. Linda Dale continued to lead the international youth, although with a small team and many responsibilities, particularly the video, pulling her in many directions, the Students Commission took on added responsibilities, including managing the unforeseen inundation and politics of media requests, the logistics arrangements for all (Canadian and international) delegates and providing leadership re logistics for the logistics and security staff (liaison officers).

Security was intense, and the requirement that youth not walk anywhere without a liaison officer accompanying them added to time delays and pressure. Liaison officers were at first overly nervous and insecure about their duties and it took some time to build an efficiently running team.

Susan Fountain was the lead facilitator for the Youth Meeting and created and ran the various activities of the day, while Kim Rebenchuk and Hilary Holmes provided content advice and worked with the youth on their various inputs to the conference.

After an official opening with the Hon. Ministers Lloyd Axworthy (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) and Maria Minna (International Co-operation) and the media, the youth delegates settled down to work in the formal Hotel Fort Garry setting.

Together with the international youth, they self-selected into various roles, which included Media Spokespersons, Keynote Speakers, Workshop Speakers, Drafting Teams for Experts and Ministerial Meeting statements on behalf of youth, Video Team, Movement Presentation Team. Many long hours were spent as youth processed content from the day's discussions and prepared for their roles.

Highlights:

Communications Youth and Youth Delegates met with Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and he promised his support for their idea of creating an international network of youth — a youth-driven organization — to deal with the issues of war-affected children.

