

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

Masks were constructed, to demonstrate communication without language, and to illustrate images of war, peace and peace-building. A movement workshop by Christina Medina, a Winnipeg dance instructor, demonstrated how concepts and statements could be communicated without language. Delegates worked from the canvas murals to develop the movement workshop. Christina was crucial to the success of many of these activities.

Youth also shared their personal stories in a safe environment using drama, music and speech, while some international delegates told their stories through their whisper translators.

The large group was split into small discussion and activity teams, organized to limit the number of languages each group needed to translate. The teams worked together for the time they were in Gimli. Teams combined both Canadian and international delegates and generated recommendations.

For some parts of the program, the international delegates met separately, as the International Youth Delegates Meeting was designed and executed by Linda Dale. During the separated parts of the program, the Canadian National Forum delegates met to consider the recommendations from the Roundtables, amend them and add others based on their discussions with themselves and the international delegates. The program began as integrated between the groups, particularly as Linda Dale's team was occupied collecting and greeting international delegates at the airport, and Students Commission staff looked after greeting and settling the international delegates in at the Gimli facility.

Steven Lee, Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, officially welcomed, addressed and thanked the youth for the efforts. Peter Moore and Tim Wilbur of the Centre provided invaluable assistance in facilitating and guiding youth in their discussions. Gail Cockburn, from the Secretariat, Susan Fountain, UNICEF facilitator, and lead facilitator for the Winnipeg portion of the meeting, Kim Rebenchuk from Senator Landon Pearson's office, and Hilary Holmes from Amnesty International Canada were also present for continuity and to provide assistance, particularly in the content area. Students Commission staff and volunteers (11), mostly aged 19-25, provided, programming and team leadership for The National Forum. The program was run in English and French, with consecutive translation by staff and youth volunteers, with whisper translation for Spanish and other languages. The contribution of the international chaperones was immeasurable, and exhausting for them through the entire event.

Media were invited to attend during lunch hour at the end of the Forum to interview youth who wished to give interviews, and the media coverage was good. Peter Moore, Tim Wilbur of the Centre and Maureen Scherman of The Students Commission co-ordinated the media, ensuring that youth were accompanied during interviews, and felt comfortable with the questions asked.

