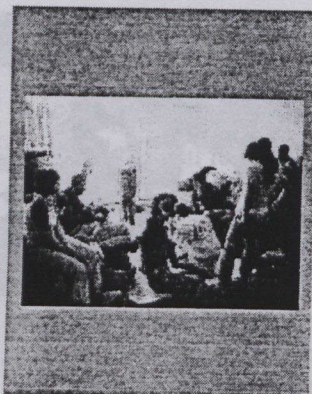
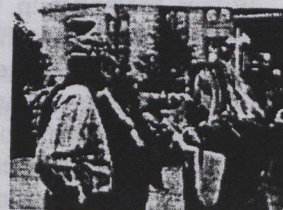


Report on The National Forum 2000 and National Forum Youth during and after the Conference on War-Affected Children

Youth Perspective:

Youth evaluations of the event are as follows:

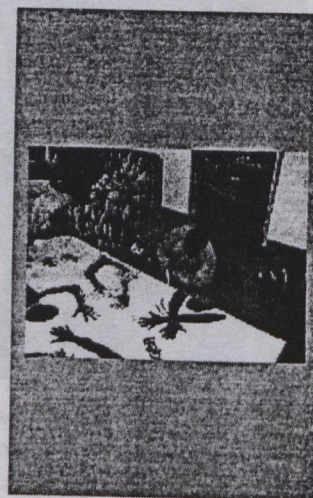
- powerful, moving, inspiring
- security requirements in Winnipeg were unrespectful, and stressful
- not enough free time in Winnipeg
- not enough time to prepare speeches, presentations appropriately
- youth participation should be "youth friendly." We should not be forced to become adults, but be welcomed to participate as youth – in our language, in our style, in our spaces: a common comment was that youth wished the whole event looked and felt more like the time spent in Gimli. (It should be noted that this is a challenge, as the Gimli event was "youth" only and as the delegates moved into Winnipeg, it became an adult event with youth participants. Nonetheless, this recommendation by youth is an interesting one, that bears thinking about in terms of how youth participate in adult events.)



Youth participants were thrilled with their success and their sense of having made a difference. They were thrilled with the recognition and promises made by leaders like Axworthy, Minna and Otunnu. A challenge here is that youth do not understand the subtle distinctions which may underlie the promises and careful words which leaders use in public pronouncements. Therefore many "Canadian" youth took away the assumption that the support promised also applied to them. As well, youth do not understand that often promises have to be administered through existing programs or funding mechanisms. There needs to be follow-up support to keep commitments made, in the way in which youth understood them, not just technically, or else greater clarity when those promises are made, otherwise disillusionment and loss of commitment will occur for the youth.

None of this evaluation should be taken out of context or construed as suggesting that the event was negative or should not have happened. It is recorded here to assist anyone, particularly ourselves as The Students Commission, looking to encourage youth engagement and participation. All in all, we, and the youth we recruited to this event, told us it was a huge success, with an enormous positive impact on the young people who participated.

The measure of the success is the effort these young people continue to expend, even as the official file closes in Ottawa.



THE STUDENTS
COMMISSION