



Brief Background

The Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council (OFNYPC) was established as a result of the Economic Indigenous Youth Symposium in 2003. Youth in attendance requested the development of a regional youth council. Subsequently, the OFNYPC was formed and is mandated to function under the auspices of the Chiefs of Ontario through Resolution 03/04 dated November 19th, 2004. Our purpose is to represent the First Nations youth in Ontario by being a collective voice for youth issues at all levels of government

The OFNYPC represents First Nations youth within the territories of Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, Grand Council Treaty 3, Nishinawbe Aski Nation, Union of Ontario Indians, and Independent First Nations. We are elected, nominated or appointed to represent the youth from each of our respective regions. Our group consists of one male and female representative from the Political Territorial Organizations and the Independent First Nations.

The Council is respectful of each member's uniqueness and diversity. The group meets on a rotating basis in each of the five territories to discuss priority and pressing issues facing youth. One of our key activities is an annual youth gathering which serves as forum for young leaders interested to learn and share information and tools. The Council has hosted six annual youth gatherings with the support of the Chiefs in Ontario and local youth participants. Approximately two to three youth attend each year and the numbers are growing annually. The Youth Coordinator located in the Chiefs of Ontario political office in Thunder Bay coordinates all the activities of the council. For more detailed information on the Council and its activities, please review our Terms of Reference and Information Booklet located on the Chiefs of Ontario website at <http://chiefs-of-ontario.org>.

OFNYPC Annual Youth Symposiums

OFNYPC is responsible to plan and coordinate an annual youth symposium that will bring together youth from all the traditional territories in Ontario. Our aim is to engage youth at a forum where the exchange of the necessary information and tools will facilitate positive change within our First Nations. The gatherings facilitate building networking relationships, consolidating and prioritizing issues, solutions and recommendations for action on the conference theme. A direct result of each symposium is the mandate and recommendations for both the Chiefs in Ontario and the Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council to pursue.

First Symposium on Economic Development

The 1st Youth Symposium was in November 2003 in Hamilton, Ontario with a theme on Economic Development. The purpose of the symposium was to introduce the First Nations youth in Ontario to the significance of capacity building in order to strengthen their communities' economy. This symposium was interesting, informative and resourceful. It had approximately 90 to 100 delegates.

From this symposium came three key recommendations; the development of an Ontario Young Peoples Council; an annual youth symposium with a revolving theme, and a youth component to the Chiefs of Ontario. A youth working group was established to present a resolution at the Special Chiefs Assembly mandating the Chiefs of Ontario to support the coordination and implementation of the recommendations.

Second Symposium on Social Development

The 2nd Annual First Nations Youth Symposium was in March 2005 held in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The Symposium had a theme surrounding Social Development. This conference held a number of workshops with discussion topics such as Colonialism, Traditional parenting, Youth Suicide, Reacting to Racism, Identifying Inner Strength and Leadership development. During discussions, many recommendations were received and implemented into the work plan of OFNYPC.

Third Symposium on Education

The 3rd Annual First Nations Youth Symposium held February 24, 25 & 26th, 2006 hosted by Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation. This marks the first time the Symposium was co-hosted with a First Nation. This symposium had a theme surrounding education and youth leadership. The discussion topics of this conference included workshops such as Humor as a Tool in Education, First Nations Education/ Jurisdiction and Treaty rights, Impacts of Residential School, Building Professional Learning Communities, Customs, Traditions and Rituals and Team Development. OFNYPC also received a number of recommendations from this gathering to incorporate into their yearly work plan.

The participants in attendance requested that future symposiums continue to be held within First Nations Territories and it was decided the theme for the next symposium address, “Language, Tradition, Culture”.

Fourth Youth Symposium on Culture, Language and Traditions

At the 3rd Annual Youth Symposium on Education held last February 2006, the youth identified the loss of culture, languages and traditions as the greatest challenge to survival in an ever changing modern society. Without cultural stability and continuity, the young peoples realize they are more vulnerable to high rates of suicide, crime, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, school dropouts, low self esteem, and other negative effects associated to the loss of culture, language and traditions.

The Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council 4th Annual Youth Symposium on Culture, Language and Tradition was hosted by the Wikemikong Unceded Indian Reserve on March 16 & 17th, 2007. The symposiums provided a forum for youth to voice their concerns and create solutions regarding the loss of their First Nation identity. It also offered an exciting learning opportunity for approximately 300 participants to regain and enhance the knowledge of their First Nations cultures, traditions and languages from a wide variety of Elders and traditional knowledge practitioners. The youth delegates recognizing the environment plays an important role in the sustainability of their cultures, traditions and languages called for a symposium on the environment.

Fifth Youth Symposium on the Environment

The 5th annual youth symposium had a focus on the environment and its impact on First Nations youth. The symposium was successful to advance awareness and understanding on physical and spiritual connection to the elements of life; Water, Air, Fire and Earth; teach earth healing skills and ancestral sustainability practices; and promote ancestral and modern day environment awareness techniques, strategies and best practices.

Sixth Youth Symposium on Leadership

Leadership and the Environment were the focus at the Ontario First Nation Young Peoples Council’s 6th Annual Youth Symposium. The goal of the gathering was to build the leadership capacity of young peoples who are the leaders and change agents in moving their peers and communities to protect the environment for the benefit of future generations. Key recommendation was to focus on treaties and to host the symposium during the summer months.