



LEVEL
YOUTH POLICY PROGRAM



POLICY BRIEF

United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and Urban Indigenous Youth: Bridging the Gaps

DYLLON LONGPETER

The LEVEL Youth Policy Program takes place on the traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & sə́ilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Coast Salish peoples.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

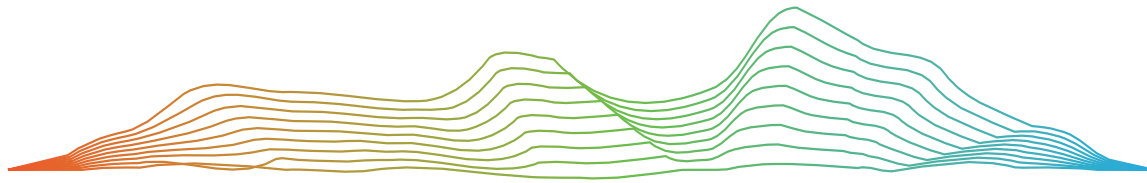
And Also Too

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Yaimel Lopez

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About the LEVEL Initiative

LEVEL is a youth engagement initiative of Vancouver Foundation that aims to address racial inequity. We do this by investing in the leadership capacity of Indigenous, racialized, immigrant, and refugee youth to create more opportunities throughout the non-profit and charitable sector.

Despite being the fastest-growing youth populations in British Columbia, Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee youth don't have the same opportunities as other young people. Race continues to be a factor that hinders their ability to have a say in decisions that impact their lives.

LEVEL empowers these youth by building their capacity to challenge and change those systems that hinder their ability to build a more just world.

LEVEL consists of three pillars of work to advance racial equity

1. LEVEL Youth Policy Program
2. LEVEL Youth Organizing
3. LEVEL Youth Granting

About the LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP)

The LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP) brings together young people between the ages of 19 and 29 from across British Columbia who identify as being Indigenous or racialized immigrants or refugees. Indigenous

and racialized Newcomer youth are disproportionately impacted by certain public policies but are rarely included in the development and implementation of public policy process. The LEVEL YPP aims to provide these youth with equitable training and leadership opportunities to better navigate the public policy landscape, and to develop new tools and skills to influence, shape, and advocate for policy changes that are relevant in their own communities. Having young people directly involved in shaping policies that impact their lives is essential to creating systemic, meaningful change. The LEVEL YPP's training is grounded from and within Indigenous peoples' worldviews, which the program acknowledges, could vary from person-to-person or nation-to-nation. Indigenous worldviews place a large emphasis on connections to the land. This perspective views the land as sacred; where everything and everyone is related and connected; where the quality of the relationships formed are key in life; where what matters is the success and well-being of the community, and where there can be many truths as they are based on individual lived experiences.¹ As such, an important premise of this training is to centre and place a particular focus on the fact that the work that has gone into developing this training, as well as the training itself, has taken and will take place on unceded (never given away/stolen) territories of the hən̓q̓'əmin 'əṁ-speaking Musqueam peoples, of the Halkomelem-speaking Tsleil-Waututh peoples, and of the sníchimspeaking Skwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

1. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-peoples-worldviews-vs-western-worldviews>

Biography

Dyllon Longpeter



Dyllon Longpeter is an Anishnaabe-English, male, belonging to an affiliated community in Northern Ontario, Long Lake #58 First Nation. He has been living on the unceded Coast Salish Territory for eight years. He raises up his hands to the unceded traditional territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh for allowing him to learn, work, and play on this beautiful shared territory. Dyllon has a passion and determination to end racial and systemic discrimination. Especially youth aging out of the Foster Care System, who have been incarcerated, who are homeless, who experience drugs and/or alcohol, or are youth of color who experience regular discrimination. Often times youth feel lost and that no one cares. Dyllon wants to help and advocate for youth to reach full access in support and services, without having the fear of being rejected. He wants youth to know they are not alone and that someone does care. He wants to be a positive role model and a leader for our youth; they need to reach their full potential, and he is 100% committed to creating a better tomorrow. Dyllon is a Youth Worker at Direction Youth Services and Urban Native Youth Association and also sometimes works at Watari Youth Services. He enjoys being outdoors—going on hikes, going camping, swimming in lakes, and just getting out of the city for a while. He likes hanging out with friends, by having a good dinner, and spending quality time.

Add him on Facebook @ThomasTrodd, and Instagram @Dyllonlongpeter

Executive Summary

This document was created to enhance the importance of culture and to provide recommended supports for urban Indigenous youth.

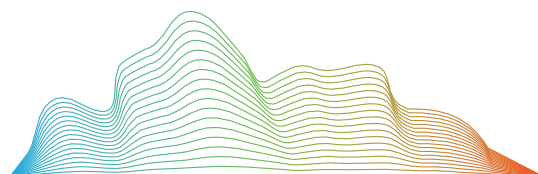
In order to address the socioeconomic issues that Indigenous youth experience daily, we need to implement the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), and emphasize on the four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual.

UNDRIP is made up of 46 articles covering support for Indigenous People. In September 2007, it was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. In November 2019, the government of British Columbia introduced legislation to implement UNDRIP as a framework for Reconciliation. The Declaration Act is “supposed” to provide for the protection of culture, identity, language, employment, health, education, as well as many other provisions that are meant to constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the Indigenous people of the world (UN General Assembly, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples pp. 1–15).

However, the United Nations’ Declaration is still not effectively meeting the needs of cities/communities and off-reserve urban Indigenous youth in BC. Urban Indigenous youth are provided the bare minimum of a connection to culture and their well-being. It is evident that there are negative outcomes that are left over from colonization and assimilation, where high rates of homelessness, addiction, and incarceration still exist.

While BC’s Declaration Act provides a framework to implement UNDRIP, it explicitly includes Indigenous governance structures outside of the Indian-Act imposed Chief and Council system, such as hereditary systems. However, urban Indigenous youth, who may be separated from their homelands and culture, may not share the benefits of implementing UNDRIP and upholding Indigenous rights, which are often land-based.

What we need to do is partner with organizations that create programs and services to decolonize spaces that provide better supports for urban Indigenous youth, and gives them access to culture, when needed. By creating this policy and having it in place, we can begin to provide connection and achieve positive outcomes that are inspired by traditional values and teachings.



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Problem Definition and Background

Often, Indigenous youth have to make a difficult sacrifice and move away from their home territories and Elders to pursue further education or better employment.

When moving to urban cities, Indigenous youth are faced with little-to-no support when it comes to culture, identity, or a sense of belonging. It is no wonder, then, that Indigenous youth face many challenges in today's society. According to Statistics Canada in 2007, the median age of Indigenous people who live in Vancouver is 31 (Milligan, 2006). From social to economic issues, Indigenous youth are more at-risk to experience struggles than their non-indigenous peers. This is a result of generations of colonization and assimilation that continues to impact Indigenous people today through discriminatory policies and inter-generational trauma, among other things. Currently, there are higher rates of suicide, incarceration, and ongoing discrimination and poverty still remain issues for Indigenous youth. Indigenous youth suffer from higher rates of unemployment, and have lower income levels, and lower levels of education.

In spite of much discussion and some progress in implementation, UNDRIP is still not meeting the needs of Indigenous youth who live in urban communities/cities. The Provincial Government of BC is still not taking effective measures to ensure the right to improved economic and social conditions Indigenous youth face without discrimination. This means Indigenous youth are currently facing less access to proper education, little-to-no employment opportunities, no vocational

training or retraining, they are not living in healthy or secure housing, they experience low levels of sanitation, poor health, and poor social security. These are all areas the Provincial Government identified to implement the UNDRIP

framework, which would begin to build Reconciliation with First Nations people here in BC. However, Indigenous youth are still experiencing all forms of violence and discrimination.

An article from CBC News on January 27th (Hamilton, 2020) discussed urban Indigenous people as being forgotten in the implementation of UNDRIP. A lot of urban Indigenous, First Nations,

Inuit, and Metis people living in cities/urban communities—and those who are away from their territorial lands—are not being heard compared to those living on-reserve. According to this article, 80% of Indigenous people live off-reserve and have little representation in UNDRIP. Given that Vancouver, BC, sits on



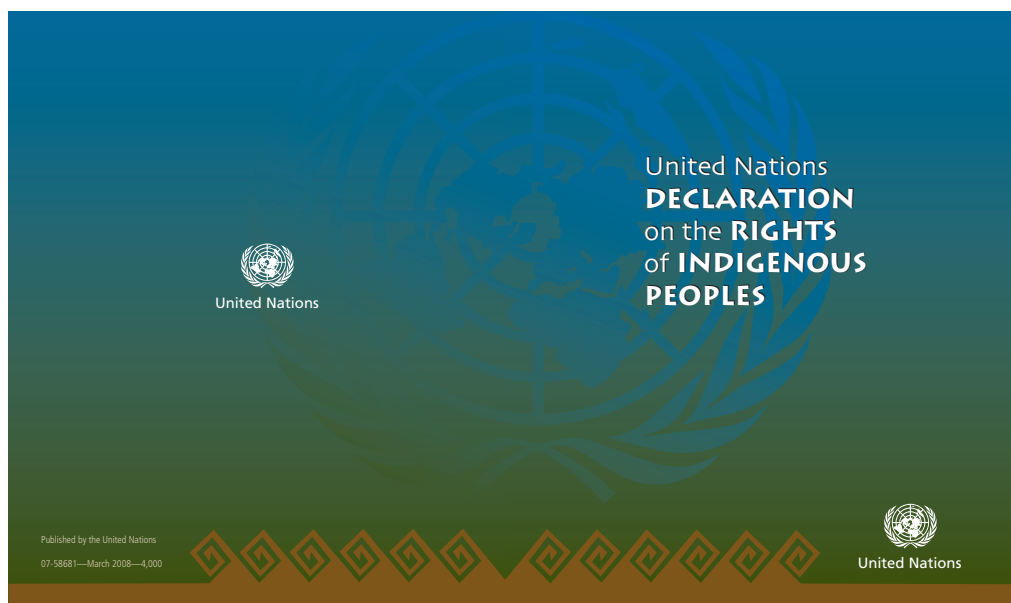
From social to economic issues, Indigenous youth are more at-risk to experience struggles than their non-indigenous peers. This is a result of generations of colonization and assimilation that continues to impact Indigenous people today through discriminatory policies and inter-generational trauma, among other things.

three traditional and ancestral lands, there should be the same opportunity for consultation as those living on-reserve. Even though there are Indigenous people who don't live on their own territories, urban Indigenous folks are not being respected or accommodated in having their inherent rights voiced. What does this say about the "Reconciliation" that the Provincial Government of BC is dedicated to implement?

A November 16th article from *Discourse* (Morgan, 2018), frequently referred to Indigenous youth in-care needing more access to culture. Glugwe, an Indigenous youth in-care from the government care system, spoke of missing out on opportunities to gain knowledge that is usually passed down by Elders or by learning his language. Indigenous youth in-care deserve better support, when it comes to connecting with their culture.

A lot of Indigenous youth in-care lose access to their culture and family, and then they lose all of their supports when they age out of the Foster-Care system on their 19th birthday. Most of the time, Indigenous youth end up living in poverty and are at great risk of using drugs/alcohol, or they end up incarcerated following the complete lack of support from the government after their 19th birthday. Even though the Provincial Government of BC is dedicated to implement UNDRIP, they still fail to support those living off-reserve.

Cover of The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf



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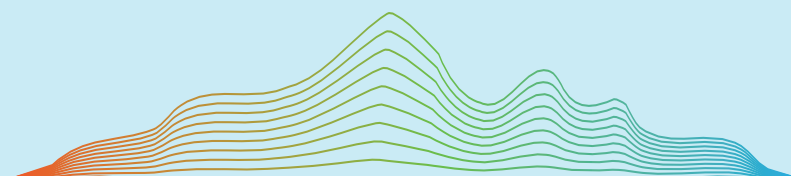
Recommendations and Next steps

1 Level of Culture.

- a) **National Level**—To provide full operation of UNDRIP and more Indigenous-focused, non-profit organizations for off-reserve urban Indigenous youth/people, so they are provided with the same support as those living on-reserve;
- b) **Regional Level**—To guide and implement policies—on an organizational level that abides by UNDRIP, and provide free programs and services for Indigenous folks;
- c) **Organizational Level**—To help decolonize spaces for programs and services that provide teachings that help create better supports for Indigenous youth and/or people;
- d) **Team Level**—To create training opportunities for team members who provide those supports to individuals;
- e) **Individual Level**—To access these supports and programs without challenge or issues.

2 More access to supports, services, training, employment opportunities, and education.

Conclusion



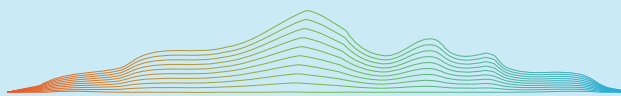
In conclusion, this “policy ask” primarily focused on UNDRIP and the effects it has on off-reserve urban Indigenous youth living on cities/communities. This ask further analyzes why there is little-to-no support in their accessing culture, identity, and a sense of belonging, which is part of the promise to implement UNDRIP as a framework for Reconciliation. The government’s promise was to provide protection of culture, identity, language, employment, health, and education. However, statistically speaking, there are still high volumes of Indigenous youth who are incarcerated, living on the streets, addicted to

drugs/alcohol, and the effects/affects passed on from generations of colonization and assimilation.

There is evidence that UNDRIP is not meeting the needs of those urban Indigenous youth in communities/cities and they are left feeling “forgotten” in the implementation of these provision imposed by the UN declaration. Now, urban Indigenous youth are faced with discrimination if they move away from their territorial homes to pursue further education or get training off-reserve. But where is the support system when they move to cities/communities?

Nonetheless, this policy ask gives insight as to how we can start to provide more supports to urban Indigenous youth, and what those supports might look like moving forward. By doing so, the national and regional level of culture can provide larger opportunities to urban Indigenous youth and organizations, and a team level of culture can provide access

to culture, identity, and a sense of belonging. We need to start working together for a better tomorrow, so that urban Indigenous youth can thrive and grow in today's society.



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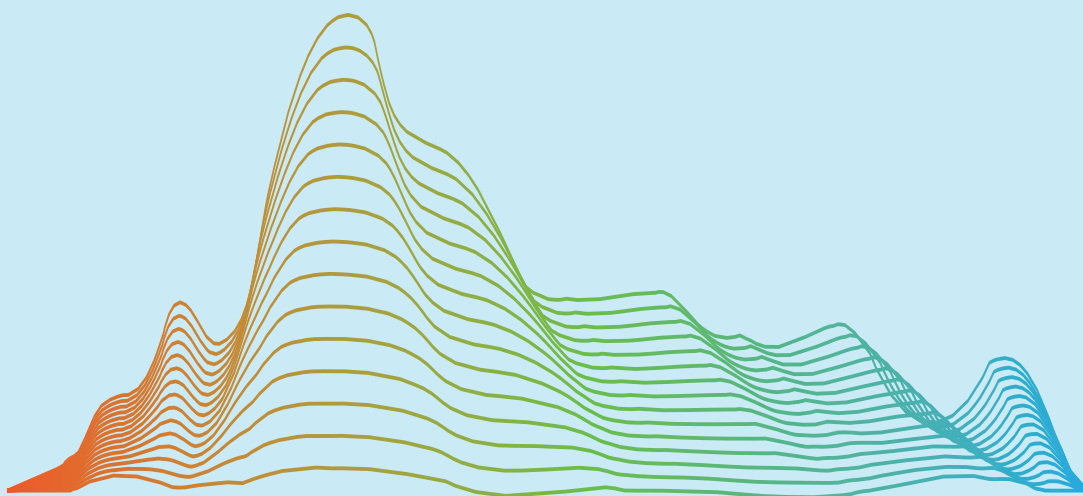
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Vancouver Foundation is Community Inspired. We are a community foundation that connects the generosity of donors with the energy, ideas, and time of people in the community. Together, we've been making meaningful and lasting impacts in neighborhoods and communities since 1943. We work with individuals, corporations, and charitable agencies to create permanent endowment funds and then use the income to support thousands of charities. We recognize that communities are complex and that collaboration between multiple stakeholders is needed to help everyone thrive and evolve. Vancouver Foundation brings together donors, non-profits and charities, government, media and academic institutions, local leaders, and passionate individuals to build meaningful and lasting change in the province of British Columbia. We see young people, their voices and experiences as part of that vision to building meaningful change.

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