



THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR
**GENDER+SEXUAL
DIVERSITY**



LE CENTRE CANADIEN DE LA
**DIVERSITÉ DES GENRES
+ DE LA SEXUALITÉ**

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La journée rose (13 avril, 2016) | **The Day of Pink** (April 13, 2016)
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May 8, 2017

Learning from Dare to Stand Out: A report to the community on feedback we received during and following the Dare to Stand Out: The Canadian Youth Forum & Conversation on STBBIs

The Canadian Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity presented our fifth annual Canadian Youth Forum & Conversation on Sexually Transmitted & Blood-Borne Infections (STBBIs) from December 6th-10th, 2016 in Ottawa, Ontario (Algonquin Territory).

This forum invited 66 high school students (58 new youth, and 8 returning youth) from across the country to participate in a week of leadership training and discussion around public health.

The highlights of this training included:

- Developing an understanding of sexual health as well as various harm reduction theories and methods;
- Developing an understanding of sexual and gender diversity, and how risk is different for different communities;
- Learning effective project management, result tracking, presentation and active-listening skills;
- Training on 10 awareness projects to bring back to schools;
- Raising awareness of HIV, its history, myths and truths, as well as laws on disclosure;
- Exploring the many stigmas associated with sex, STBBIs, substance use, and what we can do to help address them.

Our format includes:

- Workshop series and keynotes designed to provide students with the resources, skills, and real-life stories, as well as the confidence and ability to engage their peers in conversations pertaining to STBBIs;
- An honest discussion about harm reduction as well as how and where to access appropriate resources;
- A field trip to downtown Ottawa to hear a panel discussion featuring politicians and healthcare providers on how policy is intertwined with healthcare;
- An opportunity to see and demo the community projects, as well as a guided planning session for how the Health Ambassadors will educate their peers on everything they have learned.

The Forum is part of the CCGSD's Dare to Stand Out: Educating and Engaging Youth in Taking Action on Hepatitis C, STBBIs and Promoting Better Health Practices in their Community program. This program is the only national youth training program that focuses on sexually transmitted & blood-borne infections (STBBIs), run for youth, by youth.

Through our work with youth who have been affected by and infected with hepatitis C, we discovered that there was a very apparent need that was not being addressed: the presence of a health curriculum that is inclusive and sex positive, addresses harm reduction, and discusses what blood-borne infections are.

Youth are consistently identified as being an at-risk demographic group when it comes to STBBIs, and these statistics seem to compound for marginalized communities (ex. based on race, gender, sexual



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orientation, family income) or for street involved youth. Thus, we began our nation-wide project “Dare to Stand Out: Educating and Engaging Youth in Taking Action on Hepatitis C, STBBIs, and Promoting Better Health Practices in Their Community” with a strong focus on hepatitis C and HIV, along with other STBBIs.

What is our Vision?

Our goal is not only to reach out to these communities, but to get youth to take ownership of their health and education. We believe that youth know exactly what they need and what they want to learn, and that they also have the potential to be leaders in their communities. This is why our program is built on a “peer-to-peer” education system, where we train our participants to become Health Ambassadors who will then return to their communities to educate and engage their classmates in a healthy discussion on STBBIs.

This purpose of this report

Following the Forum, the CCGSD identified four Facebook posts from participants of the 2016 Forum who made important and useful suggestions on how to improve Forums. They asked that the CCGSD respond in an open and transparent way.

In response, the CCGSD emailed every participant who had participated in a CCGSD weeklong forum (including: GSA Forum-May 2014, 2015, & 2016; Allyship in Action-August 2015 & 2016; and Dare to Stand Out-December 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) and requested their feedback on how we can improve forums. The CCGSD received four emails.

Using information from the Facebook posts, emails, the Dare to Stand Out staff debrief meeting, and staff and volunteer notes from the Forum, we compiled the following concerns, as well as how we plan to address and prevent challenges for future Forums.

Some notes:

This document is ‘evergreen’ which means it will continue to welcome feedback and be edited to improve how we run Forums. If we have misunderstood, and as such not included a concern, please email Board@ccgsd-cdgs.org, and we will make revisions to this documents within the next 3 months.

We also invite anyone with feedback to please connect with us and share feedback through our new Feedback Tool (LINK).

We would like to take this opportunity to apologize for the time it took to come out with this document. The current board is composed of four volunteers who work full-time positions. With the collaboration of the staff team and additional volunteers, we wanted to take special care to ensure all concerns were heard and responded to.

Finally, we ask that you please note that concerns that relate to items that are legally required to be handled with confidentiality (ex: concerns with a specific member of staff or another participant) are not able to be included in the report because of that legal requirement. These (like all concerns) are taken seriously, and have been addressed.



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A note from the CCGSD Executive Director

A personal note from Jeremy Dias:

“I would like to personally thank all those who lent their voices and asked for the CCGSD to do better. I know how hard it can be to speak up and demand change. I want you to know that your voice has been heard.

Moreover, I want to apologize personally. Some have expressed to me that they felt the Forum was not the experience they expected or felt it should have been. For that, I take full accountability, and commit to always listening, always taking YOUR lead in how the CCGSD runs programs, and always working to do better.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Dias”

Concerns & Changes to be made to Forums

The following is a list of identified concerns identified, and responses from our team.

Concern 1: Forums are rushed. Feedback noted that participants felt like the CCGSD is trying to rush participants right into programming and learning in order to meet grant objectives. As such, participants do not have time to gain basic skills (ex: proper use of pronouns, understanding of rules, etc.) which leads to misunderstandings between participants, volunteers and staff.

How the CCGSD hopes to address this concern:

- **We are changing how we start Forums.** At the beginning of each Forum, we will now include 1) an Anti-Oppression 101 workshop so that all participants develop a basic understanding of our shared values; 2) a Respect 101 workshop that we have developed to speak to 8 key concepts: Decolonization; Positive Spaces; Braver Spaces; Pronouns; Gender Diversity; Triggers; Consent; Mental health; Appropriation, Confidentiality; Emergency & Safety information; and 3) a review of the entire program and consensus development on ways to respond to difficult situations.
- **We are reducing programming time & increasing breaks /community building time.** Future forums will have less program time, and more time for rest, breaks, and socialization.

Concern 2: Not enough space. Feedback noted that when a participant was unable to attend programming for personal reasons, the only other option was sitting in the quiet room. For some, this was not enough.

How the CCGSD hopes to address this concern:

- **We are creating more spaces.** In the past, the reason for requesting participants to remain either in programming spaces or the quiet room was because of our limited staffing. Starting at the GSA 2017 Forum, we have 1) increased the number of staff who will be present, and 2) increased the number of supervised spaces. Forums will now include: programming spaces, a quiet room, a (new) lounge, and (new) support rooms (for active listening).

Concern 3: How concerns are addressed. Feedback noted that when concerns were brought to staff (and in particular management), they seemed to react immediately to find a solution. Participants felt they was not truly listened to and that their concerns were being brushed aside as opposed to being heard.

How the CCGSD hopes to address this concern:



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- **Apology.** First, we would like to begin by apologizing. We at the CCGSD do not ever want anyone to ever feel as though their concerns are being brushed aside. Your voice should always be heard and we are committed to taking appropriate action.
- **Reacting vs. Responding.** As a team, we should never react to a concern, we should respond. Responding for us means taking the time to understand the concern, and listen the solutions of individuals affected both in the moment and after an incident. As such for future Forums we are 1) hiring dedicated support teams. These dedicated support teams are separate from the regular CCGSD staff and management team, and are there to hear your concerns and support you. They will take notes and provide active listening and support services. They will also report concerns and participant solutions to management and the board of directors. 2) New feedback forms. Participants will have an option to respond immediately or after a situation using feedback forms that will be readily available. With consent, feedback will be shared with management and the board to improve our response in difficult situations.
- **More training.** We have taken the time to train staff and management in the event of numerous situations. With this new training, they will now be able to better respond to difficult situations. Training includes Safe Talk and Mental Health First Aid. We are looking into additional training for our staff as we move forward.
- **Emphasizing opt-out options.** There is no programming at any Forum that is mandatory. At any time, participants may opt out. Participants (and staff) will be reminded of this important key concept at the beginning of every Forum (noted above).

Concern 4: Problematic Presenters. Feedback noted that some presenters used language that was not inclusive and disrespectful.

How the CCGSD hopes to address this concern:

- **Apology.** First, we would like to begin by apologizing. We at the CCGSD do not ever want anyone to feel like our programming is not inclusive or disrespectful.
- **Training presenters.** We believe that all persons can benefit from more information. As such we are working with all our presenters to improve their skills and abilities to be more inclusive. Future Forums (after July 1) will require all presenters to complete a telephone workshop/training/discussion about triggers, inclusive language, and other key concepts.
- **Providing more support and tools to participants.** As noted above, before any programming at Forums, staff at the CCGSD will review the schedule with all participants to provide fair and honest information, trigger warnings and create space for community conversations on concerns about presenters. This information will allow all participants to take advantage of alternative programming, opting out, or requesting schedule changes.
- **Tracking Presenters.** This summer we are developing a new tool that will track all presenters. Through this tool, we will track participant feedback to presenters so that we can adequately evaluate, work with, train, and provide accurate trigger warnings for presenters. This will also help us decide if we should (continue to) work with specific presenters

Concern 5: Diversity of voices. Feedback noted that there should be a greater diversity of voices of presenters and that presenters not paid by organizations should be remunerated for their time.

How the CCGSD hopes to address this concern:

- **Diversity is in our name.** As a diversity organization this is something we truly value. With a mostly QTPOC & female staff & board, we believe diversity starts at the core. We will be taking some time at our Summer Staff retreat to see how our team diversity could expand to our Forum presenter diversity.
- **Expert voices.** We do recognize that in some fields there are limited 'expert' voices. Starting with our GSA 2017 Forum we are looking at prioritizing voices that have lived experiences. We are also creating space in Forums so that youth may create and run their own programming.
- **Remunerating presenters.** The majority of our presenters who participate in our Forums are paid staff of community organizations that are participating as part of their existing paid positions.



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Starting at our GSA Forum 2017, we will be offering all presenters honoraria for their time. Honoraria for presenters will vary from \$20-350 depending on grant funding. Presenters will continue to have the option to volunteer.

Concern 6: Funding centered. Feedback noted that there seemed to be unclear information on funding for projects. In some cases this made participants feel uncomfortable.

How the CCGSD hopes to address this concern:

- **Apology.** First, we would like to begin by apologizing. We at the CCGSD do not ever want anyone to feel uncomfortable.
- **Transparency.** As noted above, part of the opening presentation will include a conversation on how much programs cost. We hope that with this clarity and transparency individuals will feel more comfortable.
- **More transparency.** We are making revisions to our website, which we hope to launch in 2017. Once they are completed, we will be publishing our audited financial statements, as well as more details on our programs. We hope this clarity will help.

Concern 7: Overworked team. Feedback indicated that participants observed some staff & volunteers working a 12 to 16 hour workday. It was felt that long hours compromised their ability to provide support work or logistics support.

How the CCGSD hopes to address this concern:

- **Changing how we operate.** Following this feedback, we specifically reached out to the Ministry of Labour and our legal team to get advice. With this information, and in consultation with staff and volunteers, we will 1) be operating two distinct teams: a staff team responsible for logistics and overall operations, and a support team responsible for providing support and active listening. 2) We are also moving all staff and support team members to either a morning shift (8am-4pm) or an evening shift (4pm-midnight), with a specialized overnight crew.

Conclusion (for now)

We take our programming seriously. More than that, we value our participants. We want you to know we are listening and taking action.

While we recognize this document takes some critical steps, we know that learning is an ongoing process and issues are never truly 'completely resolved'.

We hope you will continue to provide us with feedback on what we can improve for Forums.

Participate in the conversation at: ccgsd-ccdgs.org/feedback
Or email: board@ccgsd-ccdgs.org