

Canadian Youth Connection forum
Activity 29, January 2006 – Resolutions for 2006 and Beyond

Introduction

In early January 2006, members of the Canadian Youth Connection forum (CYC) were invited to take part in an activity designed to encourage them to think about their personal goals and how to achieve them.

Members were asked to submit a short essay that described one short term goal and one long term goal, explained why they wanted to achieve these goals, and included two or three actions they could start taking to work towards them.

Goal setting is the essential first step that youth must undertake to realize their dreams. By encouraging youth to define a vision for themselves of who they are, what they want, and how they can achieve it, this activity sought to motivate youth to take a proactive approach to shaping their future.

In April, CYC administrators will mail each member the essay they submitted in January to encourage them to evaluate how well they are progressing with their goals.

Goals

While only eleven CYC members participated in this activity, it was evident that those who did participate put considerable thought into their essays.

Members reported four main types of goals:

- Educational
- Employment/Career
- Health
- Other Personal Development Goals

Education

All members reported having educational goals. These ranged from short-term goals such as increasing study time, decreasing schoolwork-related procrastination, applying for scholarships, taking a variety of courses and maintaining grades, to longer term-goals like getting accepted for university, achieving a master's degree, and going to law school.

Members also had some very definite ideas how to achieve these goals. The need to devote more time to schoolwork was a common theme. Several members also emphasized the educational benefit of volunteer experiences. Others mentioned that they were currently working or looking for a job in order to pay for secondary education or professional development courses.

Employment/Career

Not surprisingly, the majority of members' long-term goals centered on employment and career development. A couple of members simply said they would like to find a job, while others were more specific. The following careers were given as long-term goals by members:

- career in international affairs
- teacher
- lawyer
- career working with an international NGO
- politician
- career with the United Nations

Several members explained that they were motivated to choose a certain career because they wanted to work to prevent injustice in the world, spread understanding between cultures, and encourage learning.

As mentioned above, some members said that they work in their current jobs to pay for education. Another reason cited for seeking employment was to achieve financial independence from parents and gain self-respect.

Achieving good marks in school and volunteering to gain experience were the two main ways members planned to meet their career goals.

Other members said they are taking language courses, professional development courses and even degrees to improve their chances of success in their current careers.

Health

Goals dealing with health issues were common among members as well. Some of the most popular ones were:

- exercise more or more regularly
- achieve an overall healthy lifestyle
- learn a new sport
- quit smoking
- cut back on coffee

Other Personal Development Goals

Members described other goals outside of the areas of education, employment/career and health. Some of these related to education and employment, others were totally unrelated. All were interesting and gave a glimpse into the personality of the members in question.

One member said she would like to take a firefighter course, “because it’ll be interesting, help to build up my physical stamina, give me a skill that I can tap into in case of emergency, and so that I have the opportunity to experience the firefighter’s culture in-person.”

Another said he would like to move to a larger area to pursue further schooling and to get a better job.

Several people said they would like to learn a new language. German in particular seemed very popular.

Developing spirituality and working on relationships with loved ones was another goal that members saw as very important.

On the lighter side, one member said she would like to learn to play a new song on guitar for her friends who are tired of hearing the same ones again and again!

Conclusion

The media often portrays youth as apathetic, drifting and disengaged, but this activity makes it apparent that this is far from being the truth in all cases. Youth members of the CYC who participated in this activity know what they want. Most also have at least a general idea of how to achieve their goals. It appeared that for even those members who are well on their way to success, this activity was a worthwhile exercise in that it encouraged them to stop and take stock of what they have already accomplished and what steps they have still to take.