



February 25-28, 2005

**knowledge + passion =  
action**

**National Forum on Youth and**

**Young Adult Tobacco Control Issues**



**RESPECT**



**LISTEN**

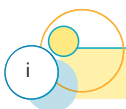
**UNDERSTAND**

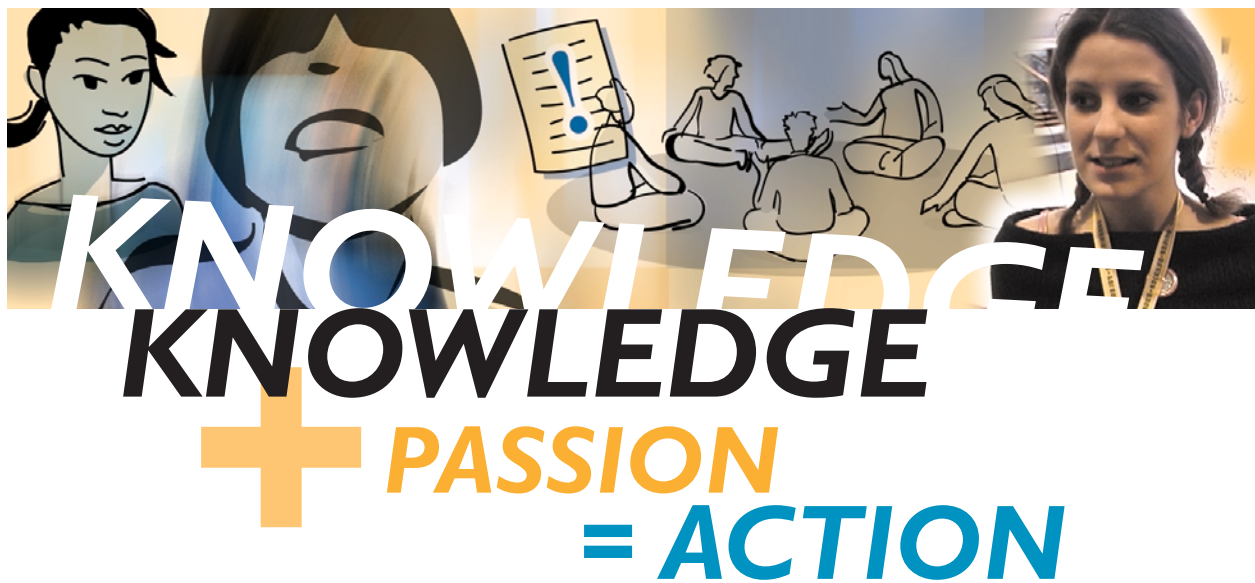
**COMMUNICATE**

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The National Forum on Youth and Young Adult Tobacco Control Issues is a Health Canada funded event. The opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of Health Canada.

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The Evaluation of the *National Forum on Youth and Young Adult Tobacco Control Issues, 2005*

## INTRODUCTION

The *National Forum on Youth and Young Adult Tobacco Control Issues: Knowledge + Passion = Action* was held in Ottawa February 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of 2005. 82 young adults between the ages of 19 and 29, and 60 youth aged 16-18 came together to talk about the issues of tobacco control.

Young Canadians make up a large portion of the smoking statistics in this country, however they are showing their willingness to take a lead on tobacco control issues too. The *National Forum* brought together many of these motivated young people, giving them a place where they could discuss tobacco control and its related topics with their peers. This *Forum* was an excellent chance for young people to talk about the National Framework for Action on Youth and Young Adults and Tobacco Control [a plan of action made especially for youth and young adults by the Tobacco Control Liaison Committee (TCLC) and Health Canada], and a great way for youth and young adults from across the country to share what they know with one another, learn new skills and discuss what is being done in their communities.



## EVALUATION

The *Forum* was evaluated by getting feedback from participants at the end of each day, and having them fill out a more extensive evaluation form at the end of the weekend. Of the 142 people at the event, 27% filled in their Saturday Daily Feedback Form, 32% handed back their Sunday Daily Feedback Form and 46% returned their Overall Feedback Form. After the event was over, conference planners looked at all of the forms and compiled the essence of what they said so changes can be made for future events.



The evaluation forms contained questions about specific aspects of the conference (for example: did participants feel safe?; did they feel comfortable?; did they feel that their voices were being heard and respected?), as well as a number of questions that allowed for some personal reflection on the weekend such as participant's parting advice to Health Canada, the best and worst parts of the *Forum*, and suggestions for future events.

A lot of energy went into trying to make sure that everyone felt comfortable enough to meet strangers and talk honestly about the important issues of tobacco control. Having an environment at the conference where equality and respect for all participants was a priority went a long way to helping ensure that everyone was comfortable enough to speak their minds. A lot of excellent feedback in this area was received. 100% of participants said they felt safe, and 97% of participants said that they felt comfortable. One person wrote that they felt the conference was very welcoming and friendly. Of those who stated they did not feel comfortable, one person said they thought the age range was too vast, and that some of the activities were not appropriate for some of the older young adults. Of the 12% of people that said the conference wasn't sensitive to their personal needs, one person said that you shouldn't expect the same rules for the younger participants as for the older participants, however there were many who felt that keeping the guidelines the same for all participants was an essential part of maintaining equality at the conference.







97% of participants who turned in their forms said that they thought their voice was heard, although several people stated that more discussion in the workshops could have taken place. 93% of people thought their voice was respected (5% didn't answer, so only 2% of people thought their voice wasn't respected.) This means that for the most part the conference succeeded in being a place where people could say what they wanted and be respected for it.

But did people actually learn anything? In their evaluation forms, people talked about how much they learned in all areas of tobacco control such as legislation, smoking bylaws and all the different views communities have on them, second hand smoke issues, and the media manipulation that is used by the tobacco industry. One person wrote that they learned about some of the side effects of smoking (sleeplessness and impotency), and that not only can you “not perform, but you stay up all night dwelling on it”. Another person said they now have a “better understanding of what tobacco awareness is” and another person, after listening to Simon Jackson’s keynote speech, said they learned a lot about how one person can keep pushing themselves until they make a change. Many people also said that they gained a new awareness and appreciation for all of the energy and time that is being put into tobacco control across the country.





The forms collected each day also provided the opportunity for participants to share their passions about tobacco control. A lot of people spoke about making sure that young people didn't start smoking, while others wanted to make sure that tobacco use was denormalized through education about all aspects of tobacco and tobacco use, including the traditional uses of tobacco.



## MORE DISCUSSION

## RECOMMENDATIONS

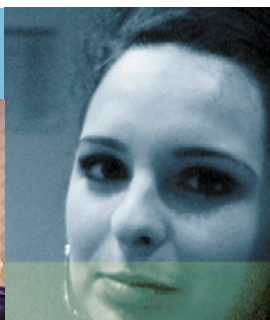
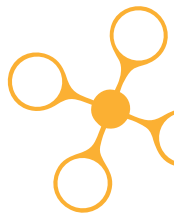


The evaluation forms asked people to write about what they would like to see happen differently at future events. 64 people in total provided an answer, and many great ideas came out of these responses. Some people suggested they would like to have seen the conference last longer, so there would have been more time to go to more workshop sessions, and more chances to explore the city of Ottawa.

Other people wrote that they would like to have seen more discussion time scheduled into the program. It's great to hear about some of the statistics, information and initiatives that are happening in other communities, but it would have been even better if people were given more time to talk with each other about what they themselves are doing, and what's happening where they live. This way, free time could have been more about having fun and getting to know one another socially, rather than being a post workshop discussion about

what everyone is doing at home, which was for many, exactly what occurred.

People also commented that there should have been more opportunities to receive training on how to help a person's peers quit smoking, support them in creating smoke-free spaces, or any other area of tobacco control they were involved in. Having a showcase of some hands-on activities is something that a lot of people could benefit from, and for future events it is recommended that there be more opportunities in the program for this to happen.



Many participants wrote in their evaluation forms how important it is they felt that their peers be engaged in tobacco control as well. They wanted to make sure that young people were kept involved, and encouraged to give their opinions in all types of situations. It was recognized that in order to do this, a person has to keep up with young people, keep connected with them, and keep them engaged as role models for their peers.

Some people were having issues with the age range of participants, saying that it was too “vast”, and that it would have been better to invite people who were in the same age group (for example 16-24, or 24-29). Targeting a narrower age group could have prevented many of the feelings of disrespect that occurred over the weekend caused by some of the guidelines enforced by conference planners. Organizers felt that it would be unfair to those younger participants to have them be the only age group at the conference with restrictions around their free time, so older participants were asked to follow the same expectations that were laid out for the younger ones. Several people thought that this policy was too much to ask of the older participants. Guidelines were set to keep people accountable and make sure that things were fair, however it was obvious that some people weren’t happy with them. In response to this tension, one younger person wrote that they were unhappy that some of the older people had issues with the policy of equality at the conference. This young person thought it was important to “level the playing field” for everyone because that’s where equality really begins. One suggestion to solve this issue was to have more than one stream of the conference, having those aged 16-21 in one group and those young adults who were 22-29 in another.





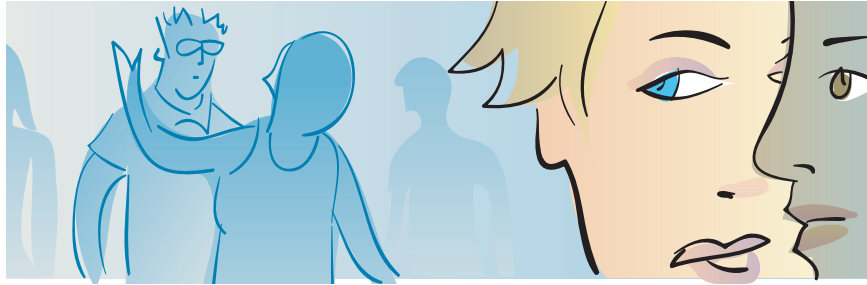
The evaluation forms also asked participants to share their most important pieces of advice, and many were eager to give it. One participant said that this sort of event should happen every couple of years so that people could gain “unity” and “enthusiasm” on tobacco control issues. Another participant said that people need to make sure that the National Framework is enforced, and though they didn’t say who needs to enforce it, it’s clear that everyone who cares about tobacco control should take part in making sure that this is happening.

There were a number of other comments too. One person said that it was the “experience of a lifetime” and another said that they loved “almost everything about this fascinating, empowering conference”. Another participant wrote that they felt “inspired” to take action at home, while someone else said that it was interesting to see the “variety” of the ideas on tobacco control from across the country. Many participants said that they were happy to meet so many great people, and that the opportunity to network with others was one of the best parts of the conference. Overall, it was thought that inviting participants from across the country at the *Forum* was a great idea and that it should remain a national event.





# AGE



## CONCLUSIONS

Most of the problems with the *Forum* were about the different ages of the participants and the workshops not being interactive enough, or long enough to support good discussion. There were many excellent suggestions made by participants in their evaluation forms to solve these issues at future events.



Sometimes the best part of a conference is being able to meet other amazing people who share the same interests as you. It's rewarding to know that you're not the only one advocating for something, and even more rewarding to gather new ideas from people while having the opportunity to share a few of your own. The *Forum* was an excellent example of this. People from all across the country came to Ottawa to meet one another, learn about tobacco control issues and talk about their ideas, solutions and hopes for the future.

It is easy to forget how much each participant brings to an event, but much of the success of the *Forum* is linked directly to the fact that the people who attended were so excited about being there. The success of the conference showed that together we can build on our experiences and apply what we learn to inspire others to tackle tobacco control issues in their communities.