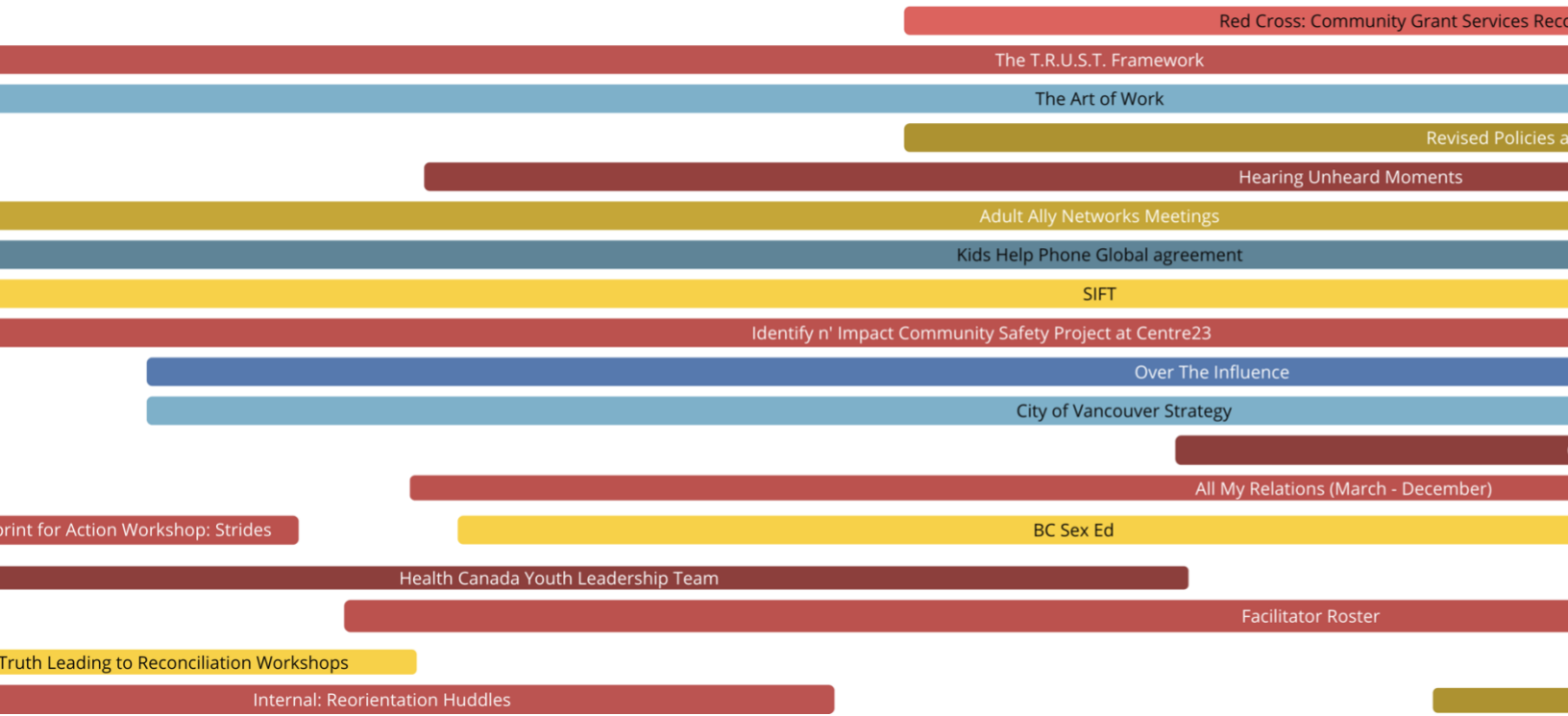


# Annual Report – 2023

The Students Commission of Canada



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Charitable Number: 886333947 RR 0001



# Message from Leadership

Dear Friends and Supporters,

*In 2018, the Students Commission of Canada launched a bold and ambitious strategy focused on working with others to support young people having their voices heard and valued so that their ideas for improving themselves, their peers and their communities could be put into action. Our desired outcome: a world where all young people transition positively into a successful adulthood. In 2023, we entered year six of our ten-year strategy and there are many reasons to celebrate. Here are some of our accomplishments that are helping us achieve our social purpose:*

- *We grew our reach from 50,000 youth served annually to over 500,000 youth served annually through innovative youth programs such as:*
  - *Take Our Kids to Work*
  - *The Art of Work*
  - *SIFT Mental Health Program*
  - *Be the Program Healthy Relationships Program*
  - *Over the Influence: Opioid Epidemic program*
  - *Hearing Unheard Moments anti-radicalization program.*
- *We turned knowledge into action and action into knowledge through the Sharing the Stories research and evaluation platform with over 300 organizations/programs participating and close to 15,000 unique youth voices registered on the platform.*
- *We ‘Strengthened the Node’ through the implementation of shared systems and a distributed leadership structure so that we could remain responsive to youth’s needs.*
- *We launched the T.R.U.S.T. Framework to name what it means to work at the SCC and to support youth in building the critical 21st century skills needed to thrive in the 21st century economy.*
- *We stabilized and strengthened the SCC’s financial position through the development of a reserve fund policy and strategy. Our reserve fund increased by 5,822% since the launch of our ten-year strategy.*
- *We moved all our team members to at-or-above a living wage.*
- *We re-established and renewed the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement through the leadership and support of Dr. Heather L. Lawford and Dr. Heather L. Ramey.*

*Our achievements this year are a testament to the unwavering dedication and passion of the youth we work with and the team of dedicated staff and volunteers who work to achieve our social purpose.*

*Looking ahead to the next five years, we are filled with optimism and excitement for the future of the Students Commission of Canada. As we continue to grow and evolve, our focus will be to remain guided by our social purpose to amplify the voices of young people and create positive change in our communities.*

*We want to extend our deepest gratitude to our incredible team, volunteers, partners, and supporters for their tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to our cause. Together, we will continue to Respect, Listen, Understand, Communicate™ so that we can put youth voice into action.*

Take care,



*Sharif Mahdy*

Sharif Mahdy  
CEO, Students Commission of Canada



*Brina Ludwig Prout*

Brina Ludwig Prout  
Board Chair, Students Commission of Canada

# Key insights

## Rediscovering Our Roots and Strengthening Our Core

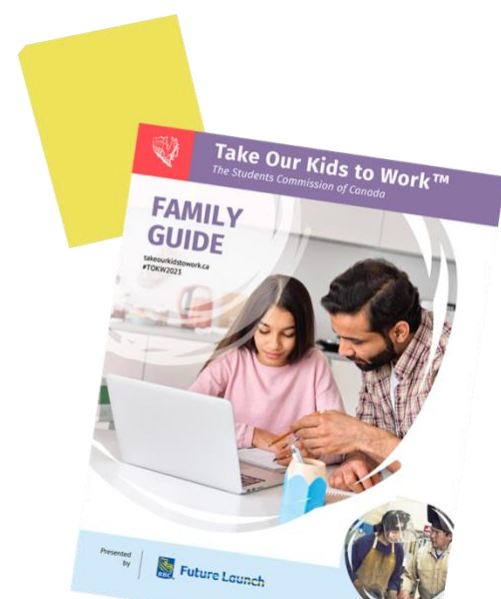
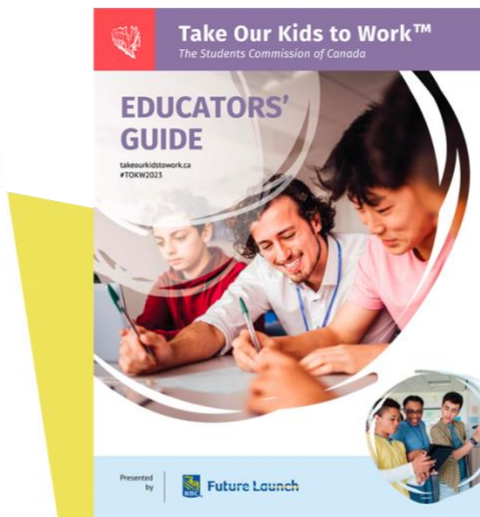
Rooted in the principles of the Four Pillars—Respect, Listen, Understand, and Communicate—we renewed our commitment to turning knowledge into action and action into knowledge. Through our initiatives, we engaged young people to drive meaningful change in their communities. By integrating research and evaluation into our practices, we ensured that our initiatives were informed by evidence and responsive to the evolving needs of youth across diverse communities.

## Navigating the Return to Normalcy

As we navigated the return to a new normal, we prioritized reconnecting with our communities and reinforcing our role as a vital node within the network of youth-serving organizations and institutions. By refining our skill sets, diversifying our funding sources, and investing in the development of our team, we strengthened our capacity to contribute effectively to the network's overarching goals. With support from the Canadian Red Cross' Community Recovery Fund, we engaged in initiatives that were focused on strengthening our capacity to amplify youth voice. Through activities such as data entry and writing retreats, we enhanced our storytelling skills and advanced our efficiency and productivity.

## Engaging Youth and Building a Brighter Future

Central to our mission is the championing of youth-led initiatives and the building of capacity and connections among youth and organizations. Through platforms like the #CanadaWeWant Conference, Take Our Kids to Work, Sharing the Stories and partnerships with postsecondary institutions, we provided opportunities for young people to lead and shape discussions on key issues such as mental health and environmental sustainability. By engaging diverse stakeholders, including parents, caregivers, practitioners, and policymakers, we created an integrated network of support that fosters inclusivity and empowers young Canadians.

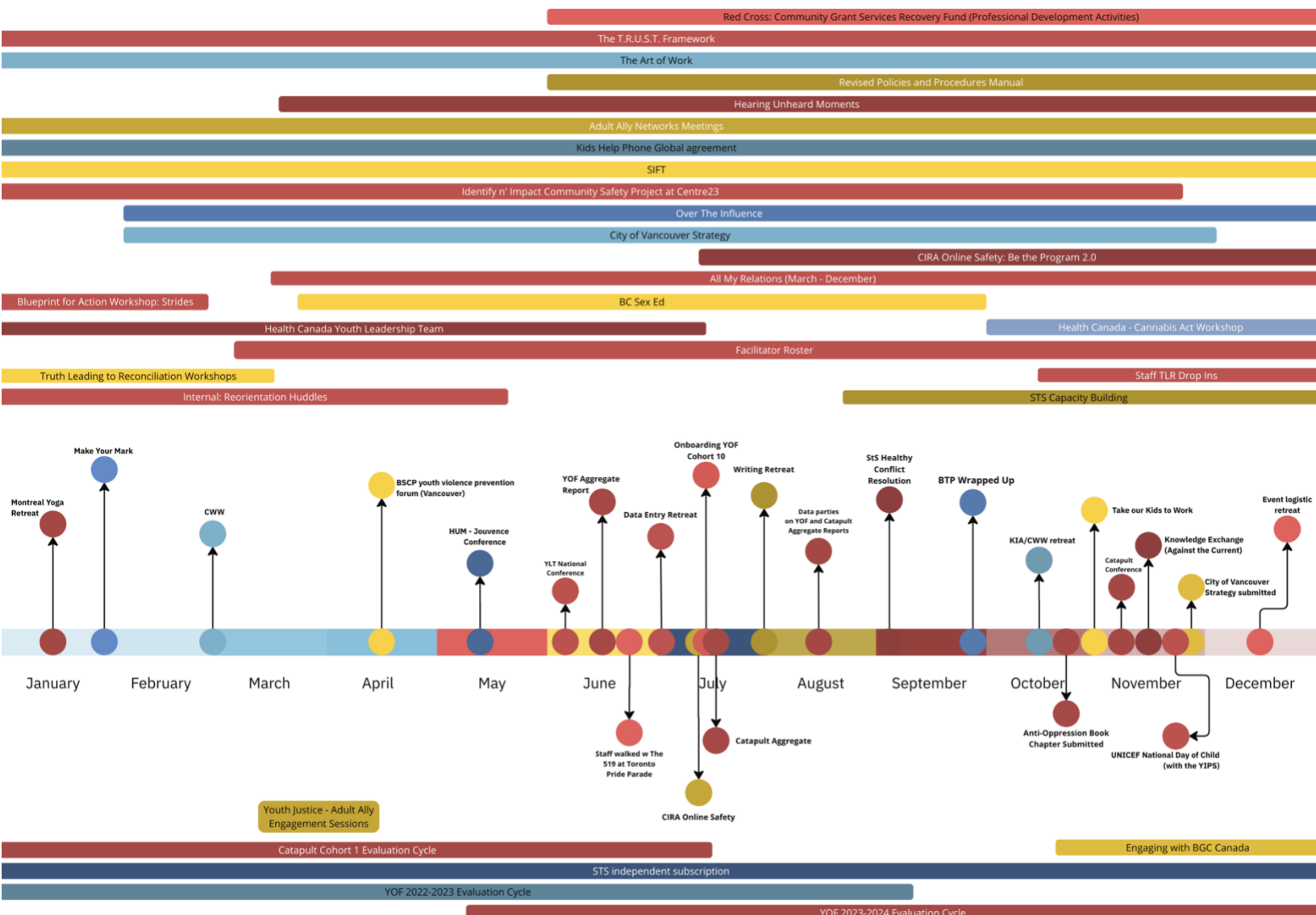


# Intentionally executing our social purpose

The Students Commission of Canada (SCC) is an inter-generational national charitable organization. Our focus is to stay small, incubate ideas directly with youth, and work in partnership in all projects with youth and other organizations. We focus on being a node in the web of Canadian organizations and institutions that promote youth thriving in a healthy Canada. Our role as node in the network is focused on turning knowledge into action and action into knowledge.

**Our vision:** A world where all young people transition positively into a successful adulthood.

**Our social purpose:** To purposely work with others to ensure that young people’s voices are heard and valued so that they can put their ideas for improving themselves, their peers and their communities into action.





## Turning KIA and AIK

The SCC is dedicated to amplifying youth voices and transforming their ideas into actions that improve themselves, their peers, and their communities.



### Knowledge in Action

In 2023, our efforts to address critical social issues, embrace the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us," and organize impactful events provided numerous platforms for youth to voice their ideas and turn them into meaningful action.

Throughout the year, we did not shy away from addressing the tough issues that are important for young Canadians. We tackled pressing social issues such as substance misuse, homelessness, gang violence, unhealthy relationships, gender-based violence, and sexual education by creating safe spaces for open dialogue rooted in youth voice. Guided by our Four Pillars, we facilitated discussions that built trust among participants, enabling them to explore different perspectives and brainstorm solutions.

By recognizing the importance of diverse experiences, we gained a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by young people across Canada. This inclusive approach fostered connection, reduced social polarization, and promoted empathy and collaboration. Although our programs and events varied in terms of topics and delivery, they all had the same common roots: they fostered environments where young people felt respected, listened to and understood. This trust and authenticity encouraged active engagement and participation without fear of judgment and helped to put knowledge in action.





## The Four Pillars

The Four Pillars—Respect, Listen, Understand, and Communicate—are the foundational elements of the Students Commission of Canada's approach.

### Our Four Pillars: Respect, Listen, Understand, Communicate™

- **Respect:** We start with respect for the gift and strength that each person carries within; for young people, their idealism and their capacity to improve the world.
- **Listen:** With respect as our foundation, we learn to listen. We listen not just with our ears, but with our heads, hearts and all of our senses. We listen actively, intensely, not just to words, but to silences, to deeds, to experiences.
- **Understand:** To understand is to go beyond listening, to process what we have heard from others, to reflect upon the new knowledge and gifts given to us.
- **Communicate:** The beginning of action, this is when the obstacles fall away. We create plans with others and implement them to make a positive difference in our world.

Anchored in everything we do; these principles guide our efforts to create inclusive and engaging environments for youth. In 2023, the Four Pillars model was validated as an approach that fosters belonging, inclusion and reduces oppression marking a significant milestone for our organization.

This validation underscored the model's versatility and relevance across diverse settings. For example, the Four Pillars have been integral to our adult ally training programs, which aim to foster safer, more respectful environments for youth. By prioritizing respect and active listening, these programs ensure that young people feel valued and engaged, significantly enhancing their participation and outcomes.

The peer review process not only affirmed the effectiveness of the Four Pillars as an anti-oppressive framework but also exemplified our commitment to turning knowledge into action. We continuously integrate this model in our programming, using it to inform our strategies and practices. Simultaneously, our application of the Four Pillars in real-world settings provides valuable insights that feed back into our research, further refining and validating our approaches.

Adult Ally Networks Meetings

Kids Help Phone Global agreement

SIFT

Identify n' Impact Community Safety Project at Centre23

## Action into Knowledge

In 2023, the Students Commission of Canada (SCC) made significant strides in enhancing our research and evaluation practices.

Recognizing the importance of strong, trust-based relationships, we focused on deepening our connections with program participants, partners, and stakeholders. The return to meeting our Sharing the Stories (StS) subscribers in person allowed us to gain a more nuanced understanding of their experiences and needs. These face-to-face interactions were pivotal in improving our data collection processes, allowing for more accurate and meaningful insights.



Our commitment to collaborative research was evident in the successful execution of data parties, innovative forums where youth actively engaged with and interpreted their findings. These events provided a dynamic platform for young people to share their insights, enhancing the relevance and application of our research. By involving youth directly in the evaluation process, we ensured that our findings were grounded in real-world experiences and needs.

Furthermore, the production of a five-year aggregate report with one of our major partners, the Youth Opportunities Fund, was a testament of the long-term outcomes that these efforts can yield. This comprehensive report provided a compelling narrative of the positive impacts from programs across the sector on young people over the past five years. It highlighted key outcomes, such as increased youth engagement, improved well-being, and the development of critical skills, but also gave a portrait of the inevitable impact of COVID-19 on the sector and the youth themselves.

The findings from this report are not only a testament to the efficacy of our services but also a valuable resource for informing future initiatives. By transforming this knowledge into actionable insights, we aim to catalyze meaningful change within the youth sector, ensuring that youth programs continue to evolve and meet the needs of young people. "..."

Finally, the SCC and Rideau Hall Foundation partnered to measure the impact of Catapult-funded projects on the youth-serving sector Canada-wide. This collaboration started with meaningful engagement in the spring of 2022 in order to establish strong foundations to ground the work. We tailored evaluation services that accommodated the Foundation's grantees diverse needs and preferences. This approach fostered meaningful partnerships, facilitated evidence-based decision-making, and drove positive change across the grantees' programs.

Staff members also travelled to Winnipeg for the Rideau Hall Foundation Catapult Conference where they met with the funded organizations and gave a presentation about Sharing the Stories evaluation, which strengthened in-person relationships with partners.



*"We're also seeing like enhanced capacity to understand and overcome root causes of intergenerational trauma, mental health challenges, evictions, issues, connection to land, elders and culture. For the participants, improved capacity and competence and to express their needs, experiences and unique identities."*

*"I learned that I can be myself. I learned new ways to take initiative and become a better leader."*

*"I feel a part of this community, this community is here for me. And I'm going to ask these trusted leaders for support on helping me get to where I need to go."*

*"And everyone said they come to [program name], because it creates deeper connections and it builds their confidence. And they learn how to talk to people."*

*"We make sure that our programming impacts the kids, but it's really about our overall mission, it is to empower youth to transform community and shift culture."*

*"It looks like mentors or facilitators or our staff are feeling more connected and more directly connected with the kids. It really feels like a village is raising your child."*





## Strengthening the Network

In 2023, the Students Commission of Canada focused on strengthening the youth network by championing youth-led initiatives, fostering connections among youth and organizations, and building capacity to shape a positive future for all young Canadians. Our efforts have been multifaceted, engaging youth, parents,

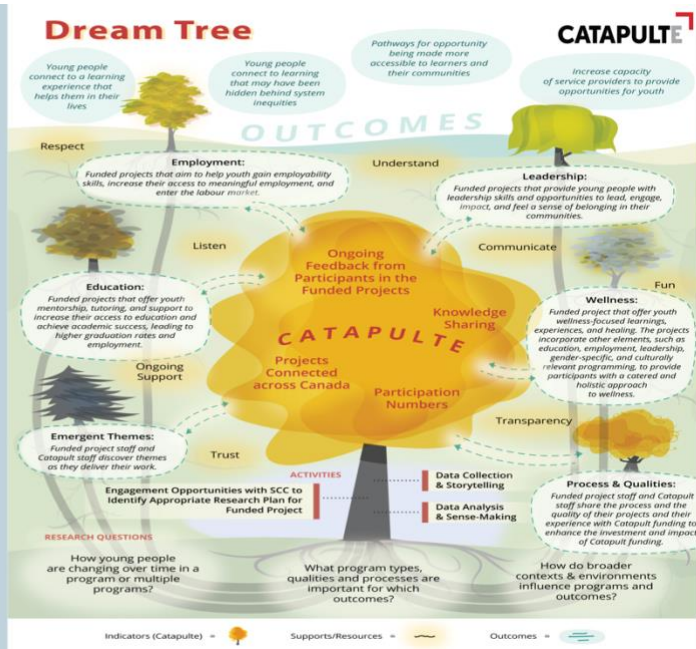
caregivers, and professionals across the country to create an integrated support system that amplifies youth voices and promotes well-being.

### Youth Engagement

Throughout the year, we engaged with youth across every province and territory in Canada through a variety of customized in-person and virtual workshops, localized weekly programming, and annual cornerstone events such as the Make Your Mark Youth Generativity and Reconciliation Conference and the #CanadaWeWant conferences. These initiatives brought together diverse groups of youth, facilitating meaningful connections and engaging them to lead and participate in initiatives that impact their communities.

Our weekly programming and one-off workshops intentionally included intergenerational diversity, bridging younger and older youth/young adults together in shared spaces. These interactions fostered mutual learning and understanding and enhanced the overall impact of our programs. We also delivered capacity-building workshops for young adults in disciplines in postsecondary institutions, such as Social Work, Child and Youth Care, and Teacher’s College, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to create safer spaces and promote mental health and well-being in their future careers.

Project	Youth engaged	adult allies/ partners
Art of Work	130	21
HUM Hearing Unheard Moments	36	7
Adult Ally Network		40
SIFT Mental Health	2,315	
Identify n Impact	12	
OTI Over the Influence	37	
City of Vancouver	33	
AMR All My Relations	692	
BC Sex Ed	7	
Health Canada Cannabis Workshop	86	
YLT Youth Leadership Team	11	
YIPS Youth in Professional Spaces	4	
Facilitator Roster	12	
MYM Make Your Mark	96	31
CWW Canada We Want	142	34
BSCP Forum	120	
TOKW Take our Kids to Work	486,643	
Sharing the Stories	1808	
Against the Current		293
<b>Total</b>	<b>492,184</b>	<b>426</b>



## Adult Ally Engagement & Capacity Building

Recognizing the critical role of parents, caregivers, and adult allies in supporting youth, we incorporated them into our programming and capacity-building efforts. Parents and caregivers participated in some of our weekly core programming sites, bridging the support for youth participants and creating a more holistic approach to youth well-being through the SIFT program. We also conducted individual and group sessions to equip families with strategies to create safer spaces for young people beyond SCC events and programs.

In addition to family engagement, we worked with practitioners, advocates, researchers, and policymakers through capacity-building workshops, monthly Adult Ally Network meetings, and knowledge exchange events. These interactions focused on sharing best practices for creating safer spaces for youth, families, and communities, ultimately deepening youth engagement and improving mental health and well-being. By collaborating with network partners, we bridged gaps in support for youth participants, building an integrated network of care around our core weekly programming sites and conferences, such as the Health Promotion team at the #CanadaWeWant conference.

## Championing Youth-Led Initiatives

Central to our mission is the championing of youth-led initiatives. In 2023, we provided numerous platforms for youth to lead and shape the discussions and actions that matter to them. Our events, such as the



#CanadaWeWant Conference, emphasized youth leadership, with young people presenting their recommendations on key issues like Truth and Reconciliation, mental health, and environmental sustainability to stakeholders and policymakers. These opportunities engaged youth to influence decisions that affect their lives and their communities.

A notable project this year was "Over the Influence," which mobilized youth leadership across Canada to take action on the opioid crisis. This initiative provided youth-led synergy to the efforts of the federal government's Blueprint for Action and the work of the Joint Consortium on School Health. Through a sustained year-long communications strategy, as well as policy and program development for the prevention of opioid use, we engaged youth in meaningful ways, ensuring their voices were integral to shaping effective responses to this critical issue.

## Building Capacity and Connections

Building capacity and connections among youth and organizations has been a cornerstone of our strategy. By fostering partnerships with other organizations, we expanded our reach and enhanced our ability to deliver impactful programs. Our collaborative efforts have created a robust network of support, enabling us to better address the diverse needs of youth across Canada.

One notable example is our partnership with postsecondary institutions, where we delivered capacity-building workshops to support future professionals in creating safer spaces. These workshops not only provided practical skills but also fostered a sense of community and shared purpose among participants, contributing to a stronger network of youth advocates and supporters.

Expanding on our efforts to build capacity, The Art of Work project focused on delivering Quality Employment Opportunity interventions tailored to assist youth between 15 and 30 years old facing various barriers to employment. Despite originally intending to serve 72 participants, we ultimately reached 130 individuals who received a work placement among one of the 21 employers we partnered with.

Our commitment to fostering connections extends to our collaboration with the National Alliance of Children and Youth (NACY). As a member of this national charitable organization, we have contributed to a collaborative network dedicated to enhancing the well-being of children and youth in Canada. This partnership has allowed us to connect with like-minded organizations and leverage collective expertise to better serve young people.

Another significant milestone was the launch of the SCC's first full year supporting the Take Our Kids to Work career exploration program. SCC's leadership of this program resulted in improved access for youth to critical career exploration opportunities including in-person, virtual and year-long activities that connect youth to prospective career pathways. We delivered the first-ever Take Our Kids to Work Career Live and re-established connections with educators and employers across the country.





# Strengthening the Node

In 2023, the Students Commission of Canada (SCC) made significant strides in solidifying our role as a 'node' within the youth network. By focusing on refining our skill sets, diversifying our funding sources, and investing in the development of our staff and volunteers, we have strengthened our capacity to contribute effectively to the network's overarching goals.

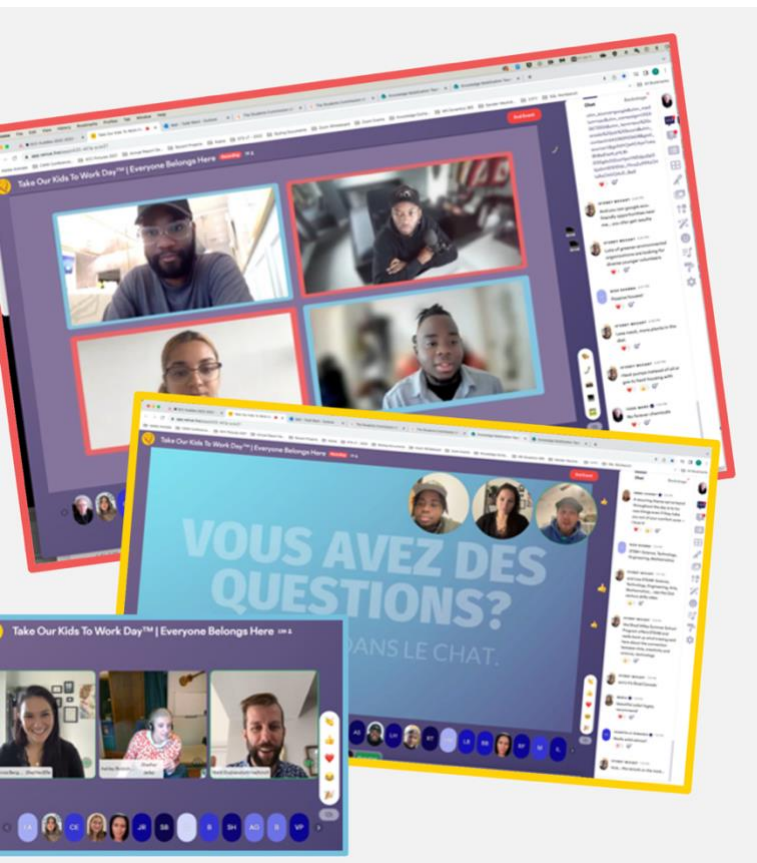
## Refining our Skills Sets Through In-Person Engagement

As part of our commitment to resilience and recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic, we strategically leveraged the support of the Red Cross' Community Services Recovery Fund. This vital partnership enabled us to prioritize healing and upskilling initiatives aimed at fortifying our organizational node and enhancing our capacity to serve youth effectively. We focused on reuniting teams and communities through in-person events and retreats, emphasizing local and face-to-face connections.

The return to a new normal involved prioritizing youth voices and social engagement, fostering in-person connections, particularly at our Centre23 youth centre in Toronto. In-person staff retreats focused on recovery from the pandemic proved beneficial by fostering a healthy and open organizational culture, offering practice opportunities, facilitating cross-pollination, and demonstrating how daily tasks align with broader objectives. These efforts ultimately enhanced our

ability to support youth more effectively. Retreats focused on processing youth voice, learning about our Knowledge into Action/Action into Knowledge cycle, developing our distributed leadership structure and building a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Unit focused on internal professional development and capacity building.

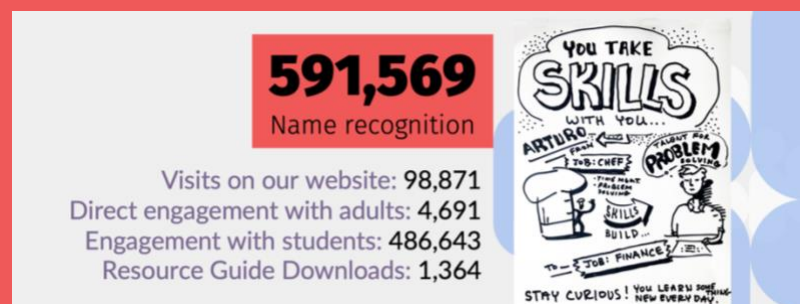
Our major events in 2023, such as Take Our Kids to Work Day, the #CanadaWeWant Conference, and the Hearing Unheard Moment Conference, played a vital role in this reconnection process. These events provided platforms for youth to share their voices, engage with peers and professionals, and see the impact of their contributions in action. By integrating themes of relationships and well-being, these gatherings reinforced our commitment to youth empowerment and community building.





## 2023 Marking the Continued Return of our Major In-Person Events.

- Make Your Mark – January 2023:** Focused on building relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, this event brought together 96 youth and 31 adult allies and elders. The Truth Leading to Reconciliation workshop at this event fostered understanding and gathered valuable feedback to improve future programs.
- #CanadaWeWant Conference – March 2023:** Gathering 167 young people, adult allies, and elders, this conference addressed crucial topics such as Truth and Reconciliation, mental health, and environmental issues. Youth-led presentations at the RBC showcase event in Toronto empowered participants to share their voices on important issues, ensuring their recommendations were heard by key stakeholders and policymakers. The Facilitator Roster, a group of 12 youth from across the country, was born from the conference and became involved in the planning for the 2024 #CanadaWeWant Conference.
- Hearing Unheard Moments Conference in Jouvence – May 2023:** This event used arts, comedy, and Forum Theatre to address moments of exclusion and foster dialogue on polarizing topics. By creating a supportive environment for sharing experiences, the conference helped youth develop the skills and tools to counteract radicalization and promote social cohesion.
- Take Our Kids to Work Day (TOKW) – November 2023:** As the first edition led by the SCC, TOKW 2023 was a landmark success. This event provided Grade 9 students with a firsthand glimpse into various career pathways, emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion through a hybrid of virtual and in-person programming. With the support of major corporate donors like RBC Future Launch, NGen, Shad Canada, CIBC Mellon, McKesson Canada, International Experience Canada, and PLUM, we achieved unprecedented reach: **engaging 486,000 students, 1,672 educators, 1,121 workplaces, and 1,898 families nationwide.** The event saw increased reach through our website and social media platforms, bolstered by an all-day live-broadcast program that captivated a wide audience. Additionally, we produced a number of bilingual resources, including facilitation guides and videos, further enhancing the accessibility and impact of the event. This expansive participation not only shaped the future aspirations of young minds but also equipped them with valuable employability skills, reinforcing the significant impact of TOKW on youth development and career readiness.
- Against the Current – November 2023:** Building on our themes of Relationships and Wellbeing, this event brought together 158 youth, researchers, and practitioners to reimagine upstream prevention strategies. Participants shared their experiences and ideas, feeling inspired and empowered by the event's collaborative atmosphere.



Adult Ally Networks Meetings

Kids Help Phone Global agreement

SIFT

Impact Community Safety Project at Centre23

## Diversifying Our Funding Sources

The SCC continued to diversify its funding sources and generated the most revenue in our history to support our charitable purpose. In 2023, we successfully secured new funding partnerships and expanded existing ones, providing a more robust financial foundation for our programs. Collaborations with corporate donors such as RBC Future Launch, NGen, CIBC Mellon and McKesson Canada helped diversify our funding sources. We also strengthened existing partnerships with the Government of Canada through multi-year funding contribution agreements on programs supporting mental health for youth in response to COVID-19, Healthy Relationships, Addressing the Opioid Crisis and Truth and Reconciliation.

## Fostering Trust and Organizational Culture

At the heart of our organizational evolution lies a commitment to fostering trust and cultivating a supportive SCC culture. We embarked on a journey of breaking down silos and re-integrating with our social purpose, nurturing healthier work relationships, and fostering an

environment where healthy conflict can thrive within appropriate boundaries and structures. Integral to this transformation is the continual integration of our T.R.U.S.T. Framework into our work and team dynamics. This framework served as a guiding light, visible in our youth engagement processes across various programs and conferences.

Through initiatives such as building relationships, fostering community through intentional activities, establishing group guidelines, and embracing healthy conflict, we empower youth to flourish in diverse ways, culminating in the creation of exceptional products. As a result, we've witnessed the stabilization of our team and a significant reinforcement of team spirit. By refocusing on our pillars and frameworks, we've unified around a common purpose, learning to collaborate effectively and cohesively towards our shared goals.



# Financial Summary

For the year ended December 31	2023	2022
<b>REVENUES</b>		
Contributions	\$ 2,313,449	\$ 1,442,577
Fees for service	1,313,399	1,948,207
Public Health Agency of Canada	1,030,220	652,391
Conference	69,120	80,000
Interest and other	57,602	28,723
Government assistance	-	11,596
	<u>\$ 4,783,790</u>	<u>\$ 4,163,494</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Personnel	\$ 2,366,613	\$2,099,494
Program	828,318	454,963
Youth travel and accommodations	675,860	472,163
Art of Work youth employment placements	393,587	178,696
Information technology	216,743	286,949
Occupancy	96,480	117,743
Partnerships	94,443	207,645
Professional fees	37,394	42,394
Office and general	33,576	29,823
Insurance	24,316	18,999
Telephone and internet	17,590	17,152
	<u>\$ 4,781,920</u>	<u>\$ 3,926,021</u>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES</b>	\$ 1,870	\$ 237,473
<b>NET ASSETS - Beginning</b>	848,754	611,281
<b>NET ASSETS - Ending</b>	<u>\$ 850,624</u>	<u>\$ 848,754</u>

## Thank You + Stay in Touch

Stay connected with us in 2024.

[Donate to The Students Commission of Canada.](#)

Join the Sharing the Stories platform or get involved in our network of partners.

Contact us at [info@studentscommission.ca](mailto:info@studentscommission.ca) to learn about these opportunities to connect!

For more about the Students Commission of Canada (SCC) explore our [website](#) or find us on LinkedIn. To follow live updates from the SCC, make sure to follow the hashtag #CanadaWeWant and the @studentscommission on Instagram, Tik Tok, and Facebook!

The Students  
Commission  
of Canada  
Centre of Excellence for  
Youth Engagement



La commission  
des élèves du  
Canada  
Le centre d'excellence pour  
l'engagement des jeunes