Supporting Youth from Underrepresented Demographics in Leadership Initiatives

Youth represent one fourth of the Canadian population and reflect Canada's entire racial and ethnic diversity. Therefore, it is our responsibility as a country to create meaningful opportunities for youth by developing youth-centric policies and programs that address the many challenges and barriers to equity, access and inclusion that today's youth face.

4 commonly known barriers:

1. Weakened social networks as a result of systemic barriers
2. Racism and structural discrimination
3. Lack of accessible and affordable transportation
4. Lack of meaningful opportunities

Policy Recommendations:

Supporting youth requires a collaborative approach, working from a place of reconciliation and applying an intersectional lens.

APPROXIMATELY 50% OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION IS BELOW THE AGE OF 25 AND 35% OF THOSE AGED 15-19 ARE UNEMPLOYED. (ESCALATOR REPORT, 2014)

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF 12-19 YEAR OLDS IN CANADA AT RISK FOR DEVELOPING DEPRESSION IS A STAGGERING 3.2 MILLION. (CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, 2019)

40% OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IDENTIFY AS 2SLGBTQ+ AND FEEL THEY HAVE "LESS OF A VOICE" THAN THEIR NON-2SLGBTQ+ PEERS. (RYERSON UNIVERSITY, 2019)

• Supporting Youth Living in Rural Communities

Youth-serving organizations need to be aware of the general disparities youth from rural, northern and remote communities face. Separate outreach strategies and programs need to be created when working with youth from rural communities as their experiences vary drastically from urban youth.

• Mental Health and Well-being

The narrative regarding mental health and well-being is changing. Therefore, policies and programs of youth-serving organizations should reflect the shift in societal views about normalizing mental health. Organizations should actively be working on eliminating stigma and stereotypes by focusing on awareness-building of youth mental health issues.

• Consistent Funding Allocated Towards Programs Supporting Underrepresented Demographics of Youth

In order to sufficiently support the empowerment of youth in leadership initiatives, organizations need the necessary funding required to run specific programs and resources. Governments at all levels need to be invested in creating meaningful opportunities for youth to succeed.

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