

We Need to Support Young Canadians to be Community Peace Leaders

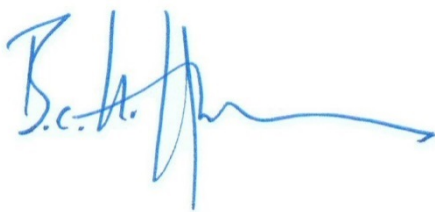
The latest statistics on violence in Canada show that the majority of our violent crimes are committed by young people 15 – 24 years old. Many of these youth face a toxic combination of personal, family, and socioeconomic factors that can make them susceptible to gang activity, aggressive or violent behaviors; and in some cases, homegrown terrorism.

After a violent incident occurs we often hear people say, “we never could have imagined something like this happening here” and the sad truth is that any of our neighborhoods may be the next to experience a violent tragedy. We urgently need to stand up for our youth and encourage them to make a positive difference in our communities! But, what can we do?

By motivating young people to be peacebuilders we would be off to a great start. Youth Peace Leadership programs can be developed and funded to teach and empower young Canadians how to have their voice and concerns heard through peaceful methods. They won't need to turn to violence out of frustration, isolation or despair.

Internationally recognized Canadian peacebuilders and conflict resolution experts, themselves marginalized in Canada for the past decade, have many great ideas to offer. For example, [the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation](#) (CIAN) conducted a pilot project at Ross Road School in North Vancouver called Peace Guerillas. This project with 6th and 7th grade students was designed to act as a catalyst to mobilize and support the engagement of youth in nonviolent, positive, and constructive lifestyles. This successful pilot program exemplifies what can be done to engage youth and it should be expanded to other Canadian cities.

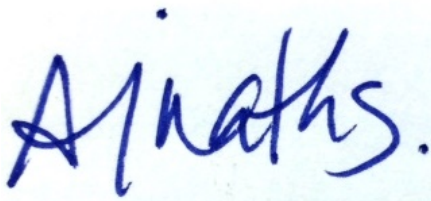
Imagine our young people as Youth Peace Leaders, in Canada and abroad. With support from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Liberal Government this is the future we can create.



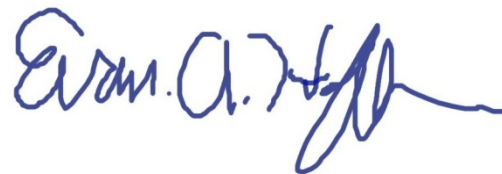
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