

Youth Speak



In their words...

Be a **father**, with lots of children and grandchildren.

The way forward is for **everyone to take the initiative** to learn about culture.

Everyone **equal** in one society. I can see myself sitting there by the fire telling my grandchildren about when everyone starting making changes and choices and being **kind to each other** and friendly.

We will be **celebrating that Cree has become the official language** of this province along with English, and that my great-great grandchildren will be fluent in Cree.

I want to educate my children, and family, and other people, non-Indigenous people, it's okay that you come to a ceremony, that you want to learn from us, because I want to learn from you. That **we can come together**.

The **Saskatchewan Rush** would be half Indigenous from Saskatchewan, half female, and would be champions.

...racism is alive and well and we need to tackle it, and educate, and speak our truth... there are girls here in Saskatchewan ten years old committing suicide. Why is that happening? It's a by-product of colonization. All of these things come together.

Youth are our future. They will carry our teachings, and their vision will change the world.

The OTC invited 45 youth between the ages of 18 and 30 to gather during two Reconciliation Youth Speak gatherings in Regina and Prince Albert during March 2017. These powerful young people expressed their vision for reconciliation, and learned how to use cell phone video technology to share their visions with the world. Mostly First Nations and Métis, the youth that gathered offered their diverse lifestyles, educational experiences, professions, and knowledge.

Vision

The OTC invited the youth to imagine their lives forty years in the future, with their grandchildren gathered around, and what a respectful relationship would mean for their lives. These are the themes we heard:

- An end to racism
- Clean water, rivers, lakes, trees, and earth
- Taking action themselves for reconciliation
- Healing the trauma Indigenous peoples carry
- Wide-spread fluency in Indigenous languages
- Indigenous culture practiced freely and respected by all
- Healthy families and vibrant life in their communities
- Meaningful entrepreneurship and professional jobs that contribute to family and community
- Equality and acceptance, including sharing culture and values between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people





I want to have more technology, more resources, more funding so that people **stay in communities** and things improve and be alive. What I am seeing are towns crumbling and people aren't going outside, they are afraid. I want my grandchildren and children **interacting with Elders, and living in communities.**

I want to be an investigator, to solve cold cases of **missing and murdered Indigenous women.**

Hopefully there's **trees and water and rivers.**

I want to put my hand in the river where I grew up, and the **water to be pure and clean.**

Trauma would be over, that people, youth and communities no longer have to deal with the sense of suicide and pain.

These themes echo the sentiments we heard in drafting the current Reconciliation Saskatchewan vision, which focuses on strengthening Indigenous culture, understanding history, achieving justice and healing, good relationships, quality of life and economic participation, and self-governance. The voice of these youth are contributing to the OTC's goal of building consensus around a vision for the future Treaty Relationship in Saskatchewan.

Experience

When asked about their experience at Youth Speak, the youth taught us how we could better support them. The youth learned about reconciliation and created strong bonds in only two days with each other, were inspired by each other, and felt heard and empowered to use their voice. Intergenerational bonding also occurred, and elder presence was highly valued. They gathered tools, skills, and the knowledge to use them, and intended to take these back to their communities to lead other youth. The experience was overwhelmingly deemed 'fun', even while working through heavy, heart-felt trauma. The youth were enthusiastic about gathering again, in larger groups, and sharing this experience with others in Saskatchewan and across the entire country.