67th Annual Commission on the Status of Women Final Report
2023

Between March 6th-16th, 2023, 5 young Canadians had the opportunity to attend the 67th Annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations in New York City. The priority theme for CSW67 was "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."

In the months leading up to CSW, our delegation had undertaken various activities to ensure we were representing the diverse voices of Canadian youth. We are pleased to share our experiences on the ground and during the lead-up to CSW in this report.

Achievements

Consultation
The delegation met with and consulted over 10 organizations both virtually and in person, ranging from high-level government stakeholders and youth delegations to non-governmental organizations. Through these meetings, the delegation was able to gather diverse input from communities across Canada

Diversity and Inclusion
Our delegation ensured that in all YDC deliverables as well as stakeholder meetings for CSW67, diversity and inclusion was a key priority. For example, we made sure to use inclusive language in our written statement to account for the diversity of Canadian youth. Though there was still quite a bit of dialogue at CSW67 that failed to account for the experiences of gender-diverse communities, we made sure to advocate for their meaningful engagement in discussions concerned with the advancement of gender equality in our statements as well as events. We also made sure to prioritize the experiences of all Canadians during our stakeholder meetings. We ensured that our conversations addressed the unique experiences of women, girls, and gender-diverse people from marginalized communities and the importance of an intersectional approach to understanding the depth and breadth of gender inequality. We similarly stressed the importance of intersectionality in our parallel events, touching on how the gender digital divide impacts varying communities with different consequences. By anchoring our work

in an intersectional lens, we were able to better account for the concerns of youth by ensuring that we represent Canada in all of its diversity.

Podcast
Our delegation ensured that diverse stakeholders were interviewed before, during and after CSW67 to ensure a breadth of voices was represented. The podcast is intended to be an explainer, accessible to anyone interested in better understanding CSW67, the priority theme, and women's rights more broadly. Individuals interviewed included youth, historically marginalized groups, political leaders and subject matter experts. As mentioned, accessibility was an important factor that was considered throughout podcast development; the podcast is free for anyone to listen to and will be made available on online platforms by both Beyond the Headlines and the Young Diplomats of Canada.

Communications
Our delegation used communication strategies to highlight our engagements before CSW and share our experiences on the ground. The communications strategy was used to provide Canadian youth with an insight into our delegate experience and communicate our activities with YDC's larger audience. We primarily used Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter to showcase the delegation's activities. These activities included the events we attended and hosted and our insights. T

Advice and recommendations for future delegations

Consultation and/or Engagement
Before reaching out to stakeholders, ensure that the delegation has a clear mandate and goal of what they want to gain from the meetings. The delegation should meet ahead of time and deliberate on what they hope to achieve both at the United Nations, but also through specific meetings with stakeholders. This sets the stage for the type of stakeholders you want to reach out to. For example, our delegation wanted to know more about online safety. We reached out to the Canadian Anti-Hate Network and asked them specifically about their online education program and gender-based online hate.

Virtual Stakeholder Outreach
Cast a wide net of potential stakeholders you may want to reach out to. Government stakeholders may take a longer turnaround time or may be more unpredictable, but NGOs are often keen to meet as long as you outline your objectives.
Space out the time you reach out to different stakeholders for better team time management - we met stakeholders over a three to four-month period, but there were weeks that were especially busy and challenging for all delegates to attend (often around

holidays or school exams season). Start to look for potential event co-hosts early on.

Meetings

Ahead of each meeting, ensure that a briefing note has been prepared and shared with the stakeholders, outlining the meeting objectives, topics of discussion, and biographies of the participants. It is beneficial to have one or two delegates designated as the leaders of the discussion who will lead each of the meetings by opening up with introductions and outlining meeting objectives. For stakeholders you want to especially keep in touch with, you can also include an ask or request, e.g. meeting up in person at the United Nations or hosting an event together.

Podcast

When meeting with stakeholders to gather content for the podcast, ensure that an agenda outlining potential topics of discussion and any draft questions you intend to ask the stakeholders has been shared with all attendees in advance of the meeting. As well, ensure that you follow up before the meeting to remind stakeholders when the meeting is taking place. If and when possible, you should allow the stakeholders to review and provide comments on any material they would like to cover during the meeting. However, it is important to always be conscious of the time commitment of stakeholders. When possible, I would encourage you to simplify processes for the stakeholders who have agreed to participate so that the experience is easy and enjoyable for them. For the meeting itself, if it is virtual, you should log on a few minutes beforehand to address any technical or connectivity issues. Before starting the meeting, let stakeholders know that you will be recording and that their insights may be included in the podcast episode. Outline where the podcast will be made available and the goals of the episode. Use the agenda as a guide for the meeting, but do not be afraid to stray from the agenda to allow for better conversation and insights from the stakeholder. You are there to guide the conversation to an extent, but you should be cognizant of the stakeholder's area of interest and expertise and tailor your questions and comments accordingly to have the most fruitful discussion possible. After the discussion, you should send a follow-up email thanking the stakeholder. Once the draft episode is ready, share it with all the stakeholders included in the episode via email.

Technical Considerations

On the technical side, it is easiest to gather quality audio if the stakeholder is able to meet in person. This way, you can ensure that you have your tech and microphones set up in advance to gather quality audio. That said, often, it is not possible to use proper audio recording tools and software. In the case of virtual meetings, I found it helpful to set up my own audio channel with a microphone that connected to my computer and fed into my audio recording software, listening with headphones so my own audio channel was isolated. Then I asked stakeholders to record their own audio, ideally with a

microphone or computer, but if that was not available, as a voice note on their phone, and to listen to the interview through headphones. This way, they could share their isolated audio channel with me, which simplified the editing process on my end.

I would note that the U.N. Headquarters did not allow audio and recording equipment to be brought inside the building, so be prepared to pivot and adapt as necessary when interviewing and meeting with stakeholders.

Privacy and Consent
For future Podcast Coordinators, I would note that it would be helpful to target events ahead of time and attempt to contact speakers in advance of their session. I would also encourage you to consider the privacy element of recording interviews. Ensure you have consent from participants to include their audio in a podcast episode, except in the case of public events. Do not be afraid to speak up! I think it can be intimidating to approach people, but generally, panellists and speakers are excited to speak about their areas of expertise.

Diversity and Inclusion
It is crucial that in the beginning stages of planning that diversity and inclusion is made a key pillar in all delegation work. It is important to acknowledge that Canadian youth come from varying circumstances, so as a delegation representing these diverse youth, that you acknowledge your role as a continuous learner of the experiences of others. In regards to initial stakeholder meetings and research, so that you head to CSW with a better idea of the diversity of the Canadian population, a best practice would be to structure meetings in a way to include discussion about the intersectional nature of gender inequality. This can be done by ensuring that meeting briefing notes address intersectional issues and the importance of these barriers to meaningful youth engagement in decision-making systems. This would serve to create a more safe and inclusive platform for all youth watching your journey to CSW. Though our delegation was quite successful in grounding our work in an intersectional lens, another best practice that we would recommend that was not done by our team is to structure a meeting around diversity and inclusion. This could be through researching stakeholders whose mandates revolve around the meaningful inclusion of all marginalized communities in order to learn more about safe and inclusive language that should be used as well as ways to listen/listen more meaningfully in order to better represent the diversity of Canadian youth.

Communications
In the lead-up to CSW, our team discussed various options for executing the communications strategy. Ultimately, we landed on a strategy which in the end was not the easiest to implement. In particular, our delegation agreed to send photos/content into

a singular group chat from our individual sessions and engagements to then be shared by the communications coordinator on various platforms. The major concern noted with this strategy is that, in practice, not all delegates shared content with the communications coordinator, and as such, there was not an adequate or fulsome representation on social media of the delegation's diverse experiences at CSW. For future communications coordinators, I would suggest delegating a particular day to each delegate for producing the bulk of the content. In this regard, you will ensure that each delegate's unique experiences are highlighted and represent a more well-rounded and diverse experience.

Key Forum Sessions Attended

Oral Statement Delivery
March 15, 2023
YDC's CSW67 delegation had the privilege of delivering an oral statement to Council at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. To participate, Majenta Braumberger submitted an online application on behalf of the delegation, expressing interest in delivering an oral statement online. Once that application was accepted, she submitted a draft statement on behalf of the delegation. The speech had a hard stop at three minutes, with the presenter's microphone being cut off at that point, so it was important to deliver the main ideas from the delegation's written statement as succinctly as possible. The oral statement was delivered by Majenta Braumberger on behalf of the delegation on March 15, 2023. The statement served as the culmination of months of research and advocacy.

Protection of human rights of sex workers on digital platforms
March 7, 2023
The depth of the panelists' knowledge and their passion for uplifting and protecting sex workers and other marginalized women resonated deeply with me. Panelists included sex workers across developed and developing countries, who spoke about the changing realities for sex workers operating in an increasingly digital climate. Panelists highlighted the importance of protecting women in sex work and how this extends to sex workers presence online. Digital privacy was highlighted as a key concern for sex workers, who often have family or friends who are unaware of their career in sex work. The ability of individuals to uncover the private persona and personal details of these women posed an enormous threat to their safety. To this end, "doxing," whereby individuals search for and publish private or identifying information about a particular individual on the internet, was discussed as a threat for sex workers.The deplatforming of sex workers using tools like Twitter or Instagram and the impact this has on their livelihood was also highlighted. As well, panelists discussed the negative impact of SESTA/FOSTA on the safety of sex workers. The session ended with comments on the rise of platforms like Onlyfans, and

the flagrant lack of diversity and the inclusion of the voices of sex workers in the development of online platforms.

Rural, remote, northern: Gender Justice Challenges and Opportunities in Canada
March 8, 2023

Leaders of Indigenous communities across Canada spoke about the challenges of gender justice in rural and remote areas.

A key highlight is that these issues are both systemic and intersectional, such as the compounding effects of lack of technological access, unstable and expensive infrastructure, COVID-19, and geographical challenges.

Impacts of technology in rural and remote areas include challenges to mental health support, reproductive and sexual health access, general healthcare, and education.

Digital Empowerment in Conflict Settings
March 8, 2023

This event was organized by Finland, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and UN Women. During the discussion, there was the opportunity to hear from various experts, including from Ukraine and Afghanistan, on the role of technology in conflict settings. There were various discussions about how women's access to technology enables them to participate in e-commerce or continue education, but one of my main takeaways was the role ICT can play in monitoring data and online activity to create early interventions to avoid conflict.

The Digital Age: Empowering Women in Iran and the MENA Region
March 9, 2023

This session was hosted by the Women's Freed Forum and included a discussion on how digital technologies are being used in the MENA region. In addition to highlighting family disapproval as one of the largest barriers to digital inclusion, speaker Hannah Toutounchi highlighted the important role social media played in the protest in Iran. In particular, Hannah emphasized the "power of an image" for sparking global change by referring to the image of Mahsa Amini and how that image has created a story and voice for a decades-long struggle for women's rights.

The Signal for Help: Innovation to Shift from Stigma to Support
March 10, 2023

Hosted by the Canadian Permanent Mission to the UN, this event discussed the realities of domestic abuse for women, particularly in the Canadian context.

Though we often address the ways in which technology is used to incite harm through practices such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), this was one of the examples of events at CSW67 that demonstrated how technology can be used to combat pre-existing forms of gender-based abuse. As the Honourable Marci Ien touched on during the event, such abuses are one of the major barriers in the way of the meaningful participation of all women and girls in society and continue to disempower them from political engagement. In order to combat this, the event highlighted a distress signal established by the Canadian Women's Foundation called Signal for Help. Having gone viral on social media platforms, it has been used in various situations to save vulnerable women and girls. Due to the transnational nature of the digital world, this event highlighted how technological innovations like Signal for Help can be used by abuse victims all around the world. Along with the signal, the event highlighted other technologically innovative tools being established by Canadian organizations to empower women and girls in online spaces by combating TFGBV and providing more resources on how to support victims.

Delegate Reflections

Esli Chan

I am incredibly grateful to have had this opportunity to attend CSW67, and work with a group of amazing and intelligent delegates. This was a great learning experience working with the team, and great exposure to topics of interest and organizations around the world. I applied to YDC's delegation to CSW67 as my academic research aligned directly with the topic of CSW67 and I am passionate about youth engagement in political spaces. I looked forward to participating at the United Nations and hearing the diverse work that is being done in relation to gender and technological issues.

In regards to the theme of CSW67, which revolved around gender and technology, and in addition to my role as the Engagement Coordinator, I was able to participate in a wide range of meetings with diverse stakeholders, ranging from high-level government officials, activists, youth leaders, and non-governmental organizations. In doing so, this allowed me to see a broad and unique perspective on the overview of challenges and trends relating to gender and technology in Canada. Through participation at CSW67, I was able to learn a lot more about the emerging trends and government priorities relating to gender and technology, which will help me further refine my career and research interests. CSW67 is also a great opportunity for networking, and career exposure and development as you are able to meet individuals from a wide range of sectors and truly understand the on-the-ground work that is being done.

However, I note that participating in the CSW delegation does require a substantial amount of time commitment over the course of the preparation leading up to the trip as well as while in New York. I caveat that the more time you put into preparing and investing into YDC, the more fruitful your engagements and takeaways will be. Overall, I am glad to have committed to this endeavour as I have gained great bonds with my fellow delegates, a wider network of researchers and feminist activists, and greater knowledge and passion in my field of research.

Fahreen Budhwani
I am incredibly honoured to have been a delegate at CSW67 alongside the other outstanding delegates in this cohort. I was motivated to apply to YDC, and in particular CSW67, because I have always been an advocate for gender equality and a strong believer in international cooperation through multilateral forums like the United Nations.

While I was incredibly enthusiastic about contributing to our delegation's efforts in the lead up to CSW, I was faced with various connectivity challenges as I am currently based in a developing country with limited network connectivity. As such, I was not always able to participate or contribute equally to pre-CSW endeavours. This experience highlighted the privilege needed to be a successful YDC delegate. I began to reflect more deeply on how existing network limitations in rural and indigenous communities in Canada would preclude some of the most marginalized youth in our country. This is particularly ironic as the theme for CSW67 hinged on digital inclusion.

During our time in New York there were many engaging opportunities and sessions to attend. One of the most stand out opportunities was witnessing the coming together of the two panel events YDC co-hosted. It was an honour to moderate the Youth Experts panel on March 6th and really kicked off the entire week for me. While I reflected on the lack of digital inclusion for women and girls around the world at CSW, I was also inspired by many speakers and organizations who demonstrated the ongoing efforts to improve the participation of marginalized individuals in digital spaces. I am cautiously optimistic about the opportunities that the digital space holds for women's empowerment and particularly focused on the need for *inclusive* empowerment for all women and girls globally.

Majenta Braumberger
I am incredibly thankful to have had the opportunity to participate in the CSW67 Conference as a YDC delegate. As a member of the delegation, you have access to incredible networking opportunities, including meetings with key political leaders and decision makers, and are able to gain valuable insight into the coordination and execution of a multinational conference.

I joined the delegation for several key reasons. First off, I believe strongly in gender equality. Women's rights are fundamental human rights, and I recognize that the conversation around the rights of women, girls and gender diverse people is wildly different depending on where you are in the world. As such, I think conferences like CSW67 are invaluable because they bring together diverse countries to discuss global issues. Moreover, I believe the United Nations has a symbolic role on the world stage, which is important for championing international cooperation.

This year's priority theme, "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls", was also of particular interest to me. Having focused my graduate studies at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy on privacy and technology, I am keenly aware of the power of technology; if it is intelligently designed, with policy mechanisms that factor in social realities, it can be leveraged to uplift our most marginalized communities. However, if government, business leaders, and policy makers allow digital technologies to proliferate unchecked, they can easily exacerbate existing inequality, especially for women, girls, and gender-diverse people in less developed regions of the world.

I am also a passionate supporter of journalism; now more than ever, we need quality journalism to communicate with and inform the public. The advent and development of podcast journalism is exciting to me because of its accessibility. Most people with an internet connection can access a podcast. I jumped at the prospect of creating a podcast on the CSW67 conference because I think, as an organization, the United Nations is opaque to most people. Much of the public does not understand what the United Nations does, how international conferences like CSW67 are run, and their impact on global policy and politics. With the development of this podcast episode on CSW67, I hoped to make this year's priority theme more accessible and engaging for the layperson, and to shed light on the UN itself.

I was struck by the scale of the United Nations; not only the headquarters building itself, but the size and pace of the conference. Each day was filled with constant activity; there were meetings at almost every hour of the day. The United Nations Headquarters and side events were filled with delegates, heads of state, and influential leaders and organizations passionate about women's rights. That said, an individual could have a wildly different experience depending on the types of events they chose to attend. Generally, more formal events with heads of state and UN staff were held at UN Headquarters, while NGOs ran side events at affiliated buildings nearby. I found it interesting how different the agenda and climate of these meetings were. Overall, I left the conference heartened by the passionate informed youth working to create positive

change, and hope that in future, there will be more efforts to bridge the gap between these young change-makers and the formal UN events and structures.

Iknoor Khaira
I had the privilege of participating in YDC's CSW67 delegation as the Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator. During this experience, I had the honour to work with some of the brightest women that I have met, and to learn about their experiences contributing to dialogues around the advancement of gender equality. I was motivated to apply to this opportunity because of my interests in research on the intersection of gender and digital inequity. As someone pursuing a career in global affairs, it was a great experience to learn more about global governance mechanisms and the impacts of the work of the United Nations on global gender equality initiatives. Passionate about advancing meaningful youth participation in all levels of decision-making, this was also a great opportunity to speak with high-ranking officials on the importance of youth engagement.

Through this experience, I learned more about the processes of high-level political forums like CSW, as well as the fantastic work of civil society and NGOs to advance gender equality. As a part of this delegation, I was able to participate in a series of events hosted by NGOs as well as member-states that provided me with an enriched knowledge of the current state of the gender digital divide to then apply to any of my future work concerned with global gender issues. We were also able to meet with the Canadian Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN, with whom we discussed the nature of Canada's feminist foreign policy. During this meeting, we provided the Permanent Representatives with a call to action for the negotiations of the CSW67 Agreed Conclusions. We stressed that the importance of the leadership of young women and adolescent girls in these decision-making systems be addressed. This was definitely a highlight for myself as it showed how opportunities like joining a YDC delegation allow for youth to have access to more meaningful consultations with governing bodies, so that as youth, we can shape policy to be more inclusive and representative.

This is why the work of YDC is so crucial, as it not only allows young Canadians to garner experience in high-level political meetings, but also provides a platform for young Canadians to share their experiences in these topics and gain more of a seat at the decision-making table. Especially in the context of the digital world, young people are disproportionately impacted by issues of gender and other intersecting inequalities. That is why it is important, now more than ever, to advocate for meaningful youth participation at these decision-making tables, and one amazing avenue that allowed for our delegation to do so was through this experience with YDC.