



Measuring Rural Community Vitality

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

Youth Engagement Showcase



RURAL ONTARIO
INSTITUTE

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: Youth Engagement Showcase

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ▼

There are many individuals and organizations that provided valuable support throughout the *Youth Engagement Showcase* project.

Thank you to our four featured youth: Branden Trochymchuk, Megan Raftis, Eric Duncan and Emily Morrison.

Thank you to Ryan Deska who led the project and provided creative input into the telling of the stories of the four communities and youth featured in the project.

Thank you to our project partners: AMCTO, 4-H Ontario, Young Farmers, Samara Canada, TVO, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Engage Huron, Fusion Youth Centre and Youth Centres Canada.

Thank you to Simon Brothers of Powerline Films for guiding us through the process of film production and for creating truly compelling videos.

Special thanks to all the elected officials, municipal staff and leaders of the community-based organizations who took the time from their busy lives to tell their stories and contribute their perspectives about engaging youth in tackling rural community issues.

Finally, thank you to everyone going forward who joins in the effort to encourage youth to engage in building up their rural community for the benefit of all.

For more information:

Mark Cassidy
Project Manager
Rural Ontario Institute
519-826-4204

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PURPOSE

Research indicates that engaging young people in civic leadership before they leave a community to pursue an education or career is integral to improving youth retention and return rates. A number of rural communities are showing leadership in engaging youth (e.g. North Dundas, Minto, Ingersoll, Hanover, Brock and others).

“We know that young people have innovative ideas and opinions, and they have much to contribute. We need to engage Ontario’s youth, encouraging them to contribute to their communities and help shape the decisions that affect them. In this way, we can enhance our decision-making and improve policy and program outcomes.”

Stepping Up Annual Report 2015 pg. 10

SCOPE

Most if not all rural communities engage young people to work on community projects, volunteer in hospitals or at special events and to participate in various leadership development activities. It is evident from this range of activities and the extent of community support for them that youth civic engagement is a part of the effort to renew the civic fabric and build sustainable rural communities.

The challenge before us then was not to determine what programs are the most suitable to help youth get involved in civic work – but rather to provide a practical resource rural communities could



Figure 0:1 YouthREX Fusion Youth Centre 2015

use to help them to attract and motivate more young people to participate in their community’s existing programs, projects or activities. A series of short youth-focused videos telling the success stories of youth and their communities was identified as the most needed resource.

The purpose of the Y.E.S. videos is to encourage and inspire more youth to be involved in their communities, to spark a conversation about specific success stories and to support communities

looking to foster more youth engagement. Given the target audiences and the goal of inspiring more youth to get involved in working towards community betterment, these videos needed to blend dynamic and captivating cinematography with compelling and engaging story telling. Through this project we hoped to showcase young peoples' individual motivations and their connections to their community.

The Y.E.S. videos will be the primary vehicle for showcasing the youth civic engagement story. The goal is to start a conversation, deepen the connection and measure how these youth success stories translate into action around rural community civic engagement.

PARTNERS

Representatives of the following organizations contributed to the success of the Y.E.S. project: AMCTO, 4-H Ontario, Young Farmers, Samara Canada, TVO, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Engage Huron and the Fusion Youth Centre, Youth Centres Canada and Powerline Films



Powerline Films was selected to produce the Y.E.S. videos through a competitive RFP process. Six submissions were received in October 2015: Lynnvander Media Inc., Edge of the Wall Studios, Farm Boy Productions, For the Record Productions Inc., KnightVision Video & Photo and Powerline Films.

Powerline Films has offices in Hamilton and Stratford. Their previous clients include: the Province of Ontario; Ontario Nature; Sustain Ontario; TVO; Hydro One; City of Toronto and others. For more information visit their website [here](http://www.powerlinefilms.com).

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this project was to discover and highlight the ways municipalities are successfully engaging youth in tackling rural community issues. A public campaign and

nomination process resulted in forty-two (42) youth success story submissions.

Four youth engagement success stories were selected by a fifteen-member stakeholder review panel. The four youth (below) were showcased in professionally produced [videos](#) that are freely available to all Ontario municipalities and community organizations to aid in their youth retention and recruitment activities.



Emily Morrison

(Beaverton, ON - Age 26)

- 2016 National Youth Leadership Strategy Summit member
- Revitalized rural community youth centre
- Built 'Cool Cow' entrepreneurship training program
- Successful entrepreneur on family farm
- Member of municipal economic development committee



Eric Duncan (Winchester, ON - Age 28)

- Currently serving second term as mayor
- Helped establish summer camp for grieving youth
- Participates in various community charity events
- Rotary Club member
- Became a municipal councillor at age 19



Branden Trochymchuck (Thunder Bay, ON - Age 16)

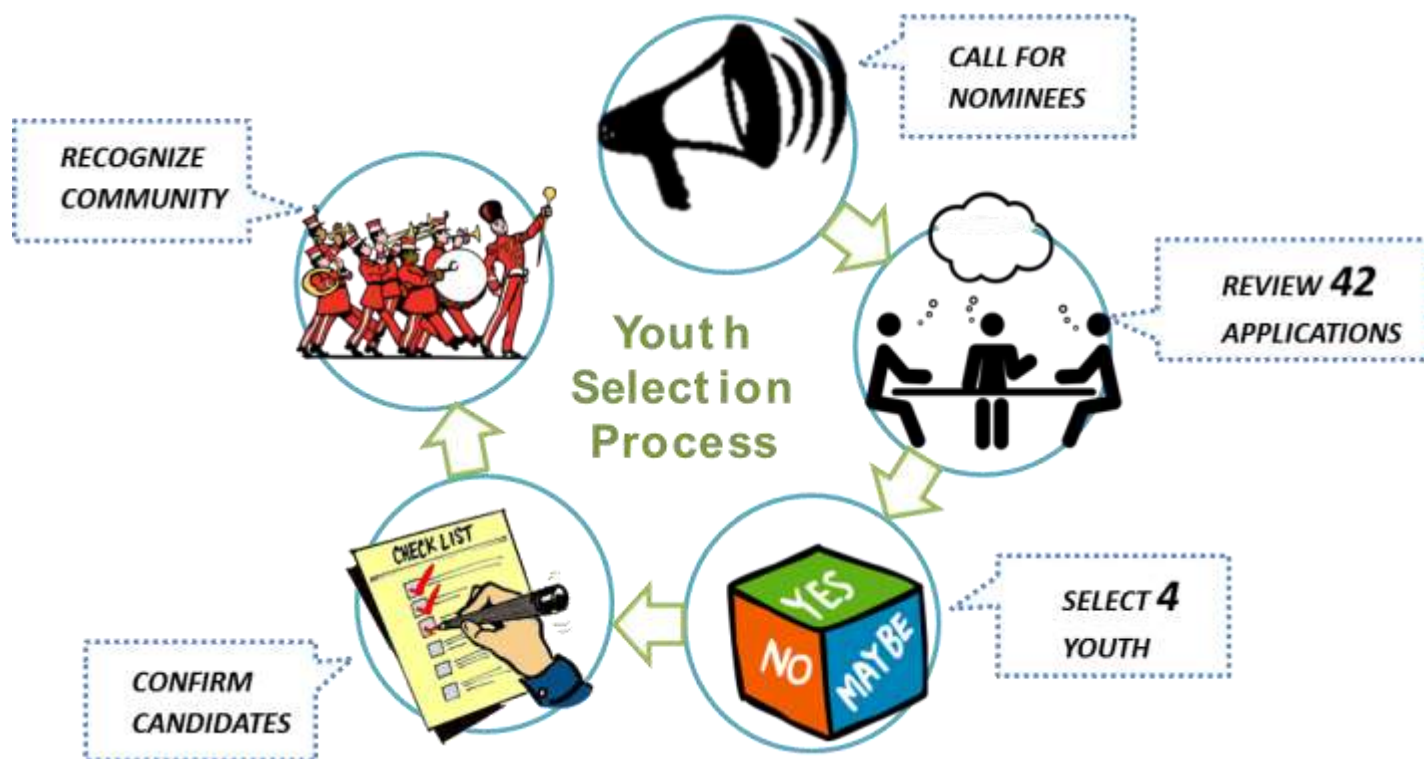
- Seniors Cultural Coordinator for Township of Hornepayne
- Student Advisor for the Ministry of Education
- Common Bond, a social justice group member
- Safetalk Suicide Alertness Coach

Megan Raftis (Harriston, ON – Age 25)

- Launched community youth theatre program
- Playwright, producer and director for Harriston Theatre
- Municipality of Minto Cultural Roundtable member
- President of Secondary School Student Council
- Summer Adventure Camp Leader for the Town of Minto



YOUTH NOMINATION PROCESS

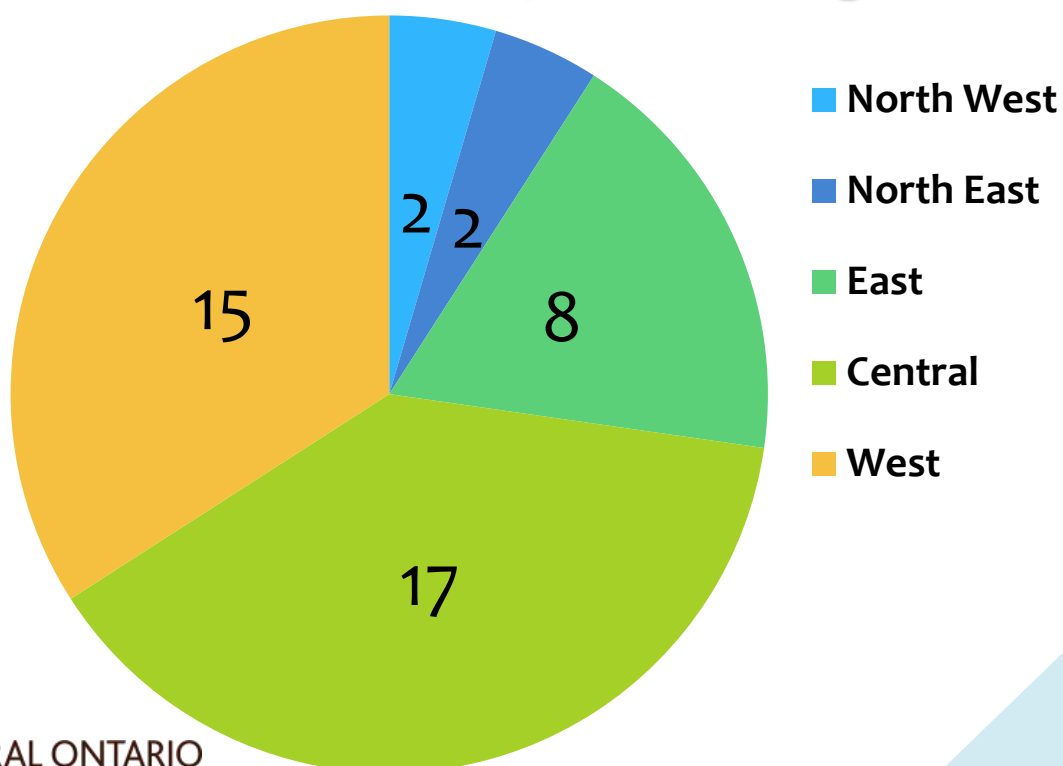


October 2015 ----- January 2016

Youth Selection Panel

Name	Organization
Ryan Deska	Rural Ontario Institute
Marta Proctor	Municipality of Gravenhurst
Les Voakes	Youth Centres Canada
Maddy Smith	Premier's Council on Youth
Bailey Greenspon	Samara Canada
Ramona Cameletti	OMAFRA
Mark Cassidy	Rural Ontario Institute
Evelyn Chambers	4-H Ontario
Genny Smith	Engage Huron
Danavan Samuels	MCYS
Spencer Sandor	MMA
Marion Price	Parks and Recreation Ontario
Laura MacDiarmid	Kings College
Sean Twyford	MCYS
Alana DelGreco	MMA
Adam Kirsh	MCYS

Nominations by Ontario Region



ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

Brock Township (Youth: Emily Morrison)

Brock Township is a rural community northeast of Toronto with a population of 11,341 (2011). Brock includes the three villages of Beaverton, Cannington and Sunderland. It houses one High School with an enrollment of approximately 450 students.



The Brock Youth Centre was established in 2001. It works with youth in Brock Township and the surrounding areas in innovative ways



to help them develop employment opportunities and strategies to build their

skills and to start building businesses to create their own income.

In 2014 Emily Morrison relocated to Brock Township. She was contracted by the Brock



Youth Centre to help create a culture of entrepreneurship among the youth in our community. Emily had experience in helping run her family farm in **Lucknow** and had even run an ice cream parlour as part of the *Summer Company* program during university summer vacation. She brought her experience, enthusiasm and creativity to Brock Township and has inspired students and adults alike since initiating her role.

Winchester

(Youth: Eric Duncan)

Winchester, population 2,482 (2011) is a village in the Township of North Dundas. North



Dundas is located in Eastern Ontario in the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

North Dundas is located approximately 50 km south of downtown Ottawa, midway between Ottawa and Morrisburg. It is spread across the South Nation River and the East Castor River watersheds.

The township was established in 1998, with the amalgamation of the former Townships of Winchester and Mountain and the Villages of Chesterville and Winchester.

At age 13, Duncan was volunteering with the South Mountain Fair and was soon involved in numerous local organizations. He worked for two Ontario MPPs - Norm Sterling and Jim



In 2014 North Dundas elected Eric - the youngest mayor in Ontario in nearly three decades.

Eric Duncan, age 22 snagged more than 70% of the vote in the 2014 election after serving one term as councillor in the municipality.

He began his first campaign for council in 2006, winning a seat on North Dundas council just three days after his 19th birthday.



Thunder Bay & Hornepayne

(Youth: Branden Trochymchuck)

The gateway to Canada's great outdoors, **Thunder Bay** is situated on the shores of Lake Superior the world's largest freshwater lake.



Branden attends high school in Thunder Bay.

Thunder Bay is a vibrant urban community in a wilderness setting. It is the most populous municipality in Northwestern Ontario with a population of 108,359 (2011).



Hornepayne, about 500 km northeast of Thunder Bay, is home to about 1,000 people.

The town was originally established in 1915 as Fitzback when the Canadian Northern Railway's transcontinental line was built through the area. It was renamed Hornepayne in 1920 after British financier Robert Hornepayne.

The municipality is currently incorporated as Wicksteed Township, after the geographic township in which Hornepayne is located.

Branden spends his summers in Hornepayne



visiting his Grandmother and volunteering in the community.

Harriston

(Youth: Megan Raftis)

Harriston, located in Wellington County, Ontario is a thriving community located in the larger municipality of the Town of Minto.

In 1999 Harriston was amalgamated with the communities of Palmerston, Clifford and Minto Township to form the municipality of the Town of Minto.



The original community received its name from Archibald Harrison, a Toronto farmer who was granted land along the Maitland River where it met the Elora and Saugeen Road in 1854. He along with his brothers Joshua and George built several mills in the area and the community soon grew.



By about 1867, with a population of about 150, the village contained many businesses, including blacksmith shops and wagon works.

The construction of the Wellington, Grey and Bruce Railway, completed to Harriston in 1871 spurred the community's growth as a prosperous commercial and farm-implement manufacturing centre.



Town Hall Theatre (Grey Wellington Theatre Guild)

The Raftis family has lived in and served the community of Harriston for three generations. Megan and her mother Peggy are active members of the Grey Wellington Theatre Guild located in the Town Hall Theatre.

ENGAGED YOUTH

Emily Morrison, Beaverton (age 26)



In her role at the Brock Youth Centre Emily helped dozens of youth launch businesses in photography, metal art, pottery, skateboard lessons, arena concessions and a very successful ice cream store in Beaverton - **Cool Cow Ice Cream Parlour**.

The Brock Youth Centre created a hands-on training facility to teach youth about business and did it through ice cream. Emily with her previous experience owning an ice cream parlour was able to put together the business plan for the enterprise.

Emily and the BYC team “hired” the initial program participants. By helping youth start a business Emily was able to work one-on-one with each youth to develop their own

business plan. She has not only acted as an advisor but has mentored students using her own life experiences as real examples enabling them to relate to her.

The *Cool Cow Ice Cream Parlour* had very tangible results. The building which was leased had been vacant for seven years. Students offered their time to patch walls, clean and paint inside. The local hardware store donated paint for the interior. They also took over a side alley, cleaned it, received a donation of gravel from a local company and made a garden with seating for their clients.

The activity along the main street of Beaverton boosted community morale, bringing locals together to see what was being done to open this new enterprise.



Excitement mounted during this time until the doors opened to a very supportive

community.

The students who enrolled in the Cool Cow business training program, learned human resources skills. They developed the interview questions and hired additional staff as needed. They built skills around money management, inventory control, food handling, scheduling and customer service.

Every week Emily held staff meetings and brought local speakers to help teach the students about such topics as: liability insurance, fire safety, health regulations, etc. Cool Cow paid seven (7) youth while they learned about running their own business.

The gross earnings from June 4-Oct 12, 2015 were \$47,000. The students even won a local Economic Development initiative when they presented their business plan to a panel of judges, winning \$4,000 worth of facade improvements for their store. The students' self-esteem improved tremendously and they were able to transfer all their new-found skills

to their resume making them very employable.

When Emily started working with the Brock Youth Centre she recognized that in order for the community and for the Township to accept what impact BYC was trying to make she would need to find a way to be able to report directly to those decision makers who influenced community members and business owners.

She applied to and was accepted onto the Brock Township **Economic Development Advisory Committee** where she could give regular updates on the efforts of the BYC to affect change in the youth of the community.

Emily was very involved in the last federal election giving hours of her time to help her local representative in his campaign. She continued to be a leading presence in the community organizing **Skatefest** (a festival surrounding skateboarding and music). Emily volunteered at a local community food festival, was on the Canada Day planning committee as well as a volunteer at the Cannington Haunted Trail. She has been instrumental in seeking out and applying for funding to enable new exciting ventures for the youth in Brock Township.



Eric Duncan, Winchester (age 28)



Eric is a very special young man and we are blessed to have him in our community. He is always striving to make it a better place, both socially and politically. His community involvement is never ending. Eric is a young man who not only wants to make a difference in our community but in fact “is” making a difference in our community.

I will share a few of his many endeavours. Eric was very instrumental in establishing **Camp Erin** in the summer of 2015. This is a camp for young people in Eastern Ontario ages 6 – 17 that have experienced a loss in their life. The camp featured grief support, recreational activities and music. Eric was able to enlist other volunteers in the community who were well versed in grief and bereavement counselling.

Not only did the children at the camp benefit,



but so did the volunteers. It was a win/win situation for everyone involved. Eric was a founding member of the **Nation Valley ATV “Ride for Dad”** committee that raises money to support prostate cancer research and awareness.

Another example of Eric’s volunteering was his membership on the gala committee for our local hospital **Winchester District Memorial Hospital**. He not only participated he actively recruited others to participate. Eric recently arranged to have a local blood donor clinic on December 10th entitled “Wrap it up in red”. Already, there has been a huge positive response to this event which is so needed.

The **Rotary Club in Chesterville** is another of Eric’s memberships and he is often seen at RC fund raising events in the community. You

may find him cooking hotdogs or corn on the cob, always with a smile on his face. Eric spearheads the **Ryla Program**, which is a rotary youth leadership event. He works with the schools to get candidates and then arranges for their transportation as well as follow-up.

Our local high school, **North Dundas District High School**, recently celebrated a 50th anniversary. Eric was co-chair of the 50th reunion weekend celebrations. He continues to be involved with the high school speaking to classes regarding civic and governmental issues. Eric was responsible for initiating and promoting an after school youth program that featured organized recreational activities at the school to engage youth. He firmly believes that the more our youth are involved in healthy recreational programs the better chance they will have of staying out of other not-so-desirable activities.

Eric also plays a key role in the **Winchester Downtown Revitalization Committee**, which is a group of community stakeholders that come together to beautify the community and create wonderful public spaces.

Eric's involvement in local politics is extensive. He became a **Municipal Councillor** at the tender age of 19 and is currently serving his **second term as Mayor**. He has been **Warden of the County** of SDG for the past two years and this year, he is also **Chair of the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus**.

As Mayor, he was instrumental in ensuring that upgrades were made to our recreational facilities to ensure that they will serve our community and specifically our youth, for years to come.

Eric always shows up at events where youth are involved. He is an inspiration to many as he listens to their stories. He really is an outstanding young man who cares about his community. He identifies a need and then gets an action plan in place without ever wanting any recognition for his efforts. He is a humble man but he has a huge impact on others and is a wonderful example to the youth in our community.

It is an honour to be able to nominate this well deserving, young man.



Branden Trochymchuck, Thunder Bay (age 16)



Branden is an outstanding, intelligent, articulate, caring, well-rounded, courteous, and driven young man who embraces life, constantly challenges himself to learn and grow and yet remains very grounded.

Branden is 16 years old and attends Grade 11 at St. Ignatius High School in Thunder Bay. He is a **Student Advisor for the Ministry of Education** and regularly attends conferences in Toronto to participate in roundtable discussions on various policies or initiatives being developed by the Ministry.



As a part of this position he is the leader for the **SpeakUp Forum Student Team** at his school, a program created by the Ministry to obtain feedback from students. Branden belongs to **Common Bond** a social justice group at his school where they participate in clothing drives, the Christmas Cheer and visit the homeless shelters. Through Common Bond he is also the **Leadership Day Facilitator** (an annual event) as well as a **Grade 8 Retreat Facilitator**.

Branden is the **Safe/Accepting Inclusive**



School Committee Student Rep for his high school and a **Natural Helper** for the Student Assistance Program. He has taken the **Safetalk Suicide Alertness Training** and is a Canadian

Red Cross **Beyond the Youth** facilitator.

It is important to Branden that troubled teens have someone to turn to knowing that sometimes kids will turn to a peer before turning to an adult. A big part of this position is being able to direct his peers to the appropriate source of help in a gentle and timely manner.

Branden also attended the **We Day** celebrations in 2014 and 2015 and is scheduled to go to Ecuador with a school group in the March Break of 2016 with the **Me to We** program to help those less fortunate than himself – a very brave and admirable act.

Branden is also a **facilitator of Cyber Seniors**, a program to help seniors with social media, computers, cell phone usage, etc.

To top this all off, Branden n has a part-time job!

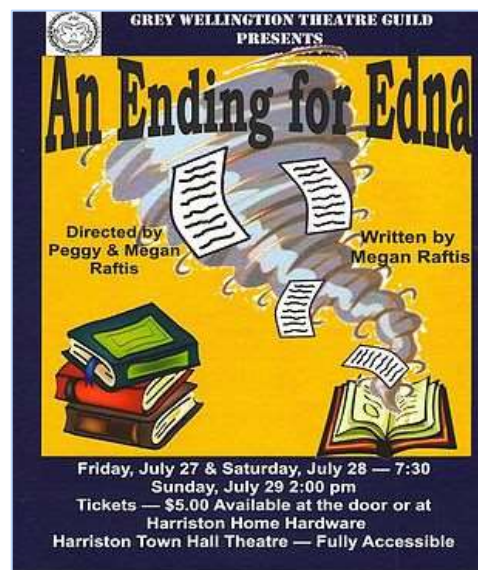
We had Branden work with us at the Township of Hornepayne (a small, somewhat

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isolated community 450 km northeast of Sault Ste. Marie) in the student position of **Seniors' Cultural Coordinator** this past summer and he did a fabulous job. His maturity, engagement skills and creativity are second to none. Hornepayne Mayor and Council were also suitably impressed both with Branden's work and his internship duties this past summer.



Megan Raftis, Harriston (age 25)



During high school, Megan was a member of the Norwell District Secondary School **Student Council** for five (5) years including terms as **President & Past President**. She organized numerous educational and recreational functions and while attending high school and university she worked with youth as a **Summer Adventure Camp Leader** for the Town of Minto.

Megan is also active in the wider arts community through her involvement as local youth representative on the **Minto Cultural Roundtable** where her experience provides a unique perspective. This group supports culture in the community and Megan is active in helping with storytelling events, culture days and other activities.

Megan has written the script for each of her six productions. By the third endeavour **An Ending for Edna**, a story of fairy tale characters run amok in a library setting, her play drew

interest from more than 30 aspiring actors!

The youth theatre program has proven a boon to both the participants and the Guild, which now has a steady supply of local young people growing up with interest and experience in the dramatic arts.

Since its inception many parents have expressed their gratitude to Megan and the guild for providing a creative outlet for children who sometimes struggled to find an outlet for their creative talents.



PROJECT OUTPUTS

Y.E.S. Videos

The four youth [videos](#) are the main product of this initiative. They are posted on the Rural Ontario Institute YouTube channel. To date there have been 1,450 viewings of the Y.E.S. videos from the site.

1		Youth Engagement Showcase - Emily Morrison by Rural Ontario Institute (ROI)	161	 youtube views
2		Youth Engagement Showcase - Eric Duncan by Rural Ontario Institute (ROI)	228	 youtube views
3		Youth Engagement Showcase - Megan Raftis by Rural Ontario Institute (ROI)	245	 youtube views
4		Youth Engagement Showcase - Branden Trochymchuck by Rural Ontario Institute (ROI)	816	 youtube views

Municipal Recognition

Each of the 42 communities submitting a youth nomination received a thank you letter from Rural Ontario Institute with a template letter they could use to recognize their youth nominee. Many municipal Councils presented their youth nominee with a signed letter of recognition from the Mayor and Council and some also made a [formal presentation](#) to the youth in Council Chambers.

Knowledge Mobilization



News articles published: (Guelph Tribune, Blackburn News, St. Mary's Independent, Farm.com, Inside Halton, OHCC Blog, St. Thomas Today, Ontario Farmer). The YES project is featured on municipal blogs and **Ministry websites**.

Summit Presentations: Women in Politics, ON East Municipal Conference, ROMA/OGRA, National Youth Summit, Hanover Youth Summit; Rural Youth Summit, Rural Talks to Rural

PROJECT OUTCOMES

There are three levels of outcomes associated with this project: the personal level (impacts on the youth nominees), the community level (impacts on the 42 communities that nominated a youth) and the provincial level (impacts on the organizations using the the project resources and videos to inspire more youth to become involved in their communities).

Megan Raftis (Harriston)

“Ideally I would like to write as a career. I would like to write plays for a living and this is something I’ve learned through experience. I started writing these plays out of a need that existed in our community and I recognized how much I loved doing it and that I had some of the skills I need to be successful. I think the recognition and positive encouragement I’ve received from my involvement in Y.E.S. is a huge boost for my future career in theatre.”

“I am very excited about the YES videos produced by ROI. These videos have been a valuable resource for my work with the Perth4Youth strategic planning project. They help municipal leaders to see what is possible when it comes to youth engagement and the ongoing positive impact youth engagement can have to inspire an entire region.”

Vicki Lass
Agriculture and Rural Economic Development
Advisor Huron & Perth

Sean Mitchell (Walton)

“Mitchell said he really appreciated the sentiment behind the Youth Engagement Showcase as a lot of the projects tackled by himself and the Leo Club were done to show that people are still engaged in their community. Youth involvement in a community is a good indicator of the health of that community,” he said. “It’s good to see the involvement we have in Huron County and Brussels in particular. Once there is that engagement and those youth are helping out in the community and making an impact, the outcome is very positive.”

On behalf of Council, thank you for attending the July 5th Council meeting in order to present information on the Youth Engagement Showcase and video of finalist Megan Raftis. We are very proud of Megan and all of her accomplishments and it was wonderful to see her actions acknowledged.

Annilene McRobb, CMO
Deputy Clerk
Town of Minto

ROMA

“The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) strongly encourages councillors to participate in this initiative and to play a role. This project will result in valuable research and as such, we fully support the objectives. ROMA would love for you to have the opportunity to contribute to this worthwhile experience!”

Ron Holman, ROMA Chair

COMMUNITY RESOURCES











- **Stepping Up Annual Report 2015**
Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services
<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/steppingup/index.aspx>
- **The National Youth White Paper: Our Communities: A Youth Agenda for Change (2015)**
FCM Federation of Canadian Municipalities
https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/events/AC2015/Our_Communities.pdf
- **YouthREX**
To make research evidence and evaluation practices accessible and relevant to Ontario's grassroots youth sector through knowledge mobilization, capacity building and evaluation leadership!
<http://youthrex.com/>
- **The Municipal Youth Engagement Handbook (2015)**
FCM Federation of Canadian Municipalities
https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/tools/FCM/Municipal_Youth_Engagement_Handbook_EN.pdf March 2015,
- **Political Participation and Civic Engagement of Youth (2015)**
Martin Turcotte, Statistics Canada
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14232-eng.htm>
- **Youth Civic Engagement (2010)**
Marian Meynard, Social Affairs Division, Parliamentary Information Research Section, Library of Parliament, Publication 2010 23-E,
<http://carolynbennett.ca/files/2010/07/Youth-Civic-Engagement.pdf>
- **Results-based Public Policy Strategies for Promoting Youth Civic Engagement (2011)**
Centre for the Study of Social Policy
<http://www.cssp.org/policy/papers/Promoting-Youth-Civic-Engagement.pdf>
- **Promoting Youth Participation. (Action Kit for Municipal Leaders) (2001)**
National League of Cities
<http://www.nlc.org/documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/IYEF/Youth%20Civic%20Engagement/youth-participation-action-kit-apro7.pdf>
- **Lightweights? Political Participation Beyond the Ballot Box (2013)**
Samara Canada
<http://www.samaracanada.com/research/active-citizenship/lightweights>
- **Youth Philanthropy Initiative**
<http://www.goypi.org/ypi-resources/for-charities.html>

APPENDIX OF TEMPLATES



The documents listed below are samples of actual forms and letters used in the Y.E.S. nomination and selection process. They are available for download from [DropBox here](#).

CATEGORY	DOCUMENT NAME	DROPBOX LINK
COMMUNICATIONS	 Invitation to Nominate	link
	 YES Program description	link
	 Thank you for Nominating (Municipality)	link
	 Thank you for Your Nomination (self-nomination or other)	link
SELECTION PANEL	 Agenda for Initial Briefing of Selection Panel Members	link
FORMS	 Nomination Form (fillable PDF)	link
	 Evaluation Criteria of Nominee	link
	 Parent/Guardian Permission Form	link

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