

Youth movement 'most dynamic ever'

Everyone deserves to be engaged, encouraged, empowered, equal

BY JACQUELINE DYCK

WE Stand Up, the youth empowering movement, was created through the ambition of high school students from the Lakehead Public and Thunder Bay Catholic District school boards. An event, maybe idealistic in expectations, led to the enthusiastic gathering of over 1,400 students in May 2013.

This year's event took place on April 24 at the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium, and was attended by students from Thunder Bay high schools and elementary schools, as well as representatives from all local school boards. Grade 6 to 12 classes from the Thunder Bay region were also invited to help We Stand Up expand beyond our city.

There are no borders for racism, and WE Stand Up believes that everyone deserves the opportunity to be engaged, encouraged, empowered and equal.

Last year we stood up against several types of discrimination, including that which targets sexual orientation, physical disabilities, and race. This year, we are standing up for racial equality and respect for all races — aboriginal and non-aboriginal, included.



ONE CITY
MANY VOICES

Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee produces this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

Our audience on April 24 heard from Sen. Robert McKay, who shares our ideals and hopes for the future of all people in Thunder Bay and the Northwestern Ontario region.

We promoted and honoured the beauty and message of aboriginal culture by showcasing the Shadow Creek Drummers and Singers, as well as local dancers with their handmade and traditional regalia: fancy dancer Amanda Suganaqueb and grass dancer Allan Wemwigwans.

The hope is that the entire community rallies behind this initiative with students becoming engaged on issues in our community — such as

racism and bullying — and then encouraged and empowered to make a positive difference.

"We can get to a place of mutual respect and kinship if we can learn to honour every culture for its unique differences and notice that no matter what you believe or where you come from, you are equal," said Ankur Shah, Grade 12 student at Sir Winston Churchill CVI and member of the WE Stand Up executive.

"The best way to get to this place is through education."

As a student-led movement, we represent the voice of youth who experience these issues on a daily basis.

We strive to engage students in important topics to educate them for a better future.

Racism, bullying, and hate are only a few of the issues WE Stand Up challenges with a wide variety of speakers (both professional and non-professional), dancers, performers, and singers.

The WE Stand Up committee received a Mayor's Community Safety Award last fall for our positive work

through 2013's event.

This day is not just a conference or speeches — it is an event!

It's a movement inspired by WE Day, the flagship event of Free the Children, using youth-to-youth connections to engage, encourage and empower in tone and presentation.

An even flow throughout the day of highs and lows makes WE Stand

Up a remarkable show, one that inspires youth to come together for the good of someone else.

Youth can influence their peers to be enthusiastic for positive change, and help build a

better city, one free from bullying, racism, homophobia, and hate.

WE Stand Up is perhaps the most dynamic movement that has ever come to Northwestern Ontario, and is, to date, still having positive and lasting implications that will continue to change our community and our world.

Jacqueline Dyck is a Grade 10 student at Hammarskjold High School and a member of the executive of WE Stand Up 2014.

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