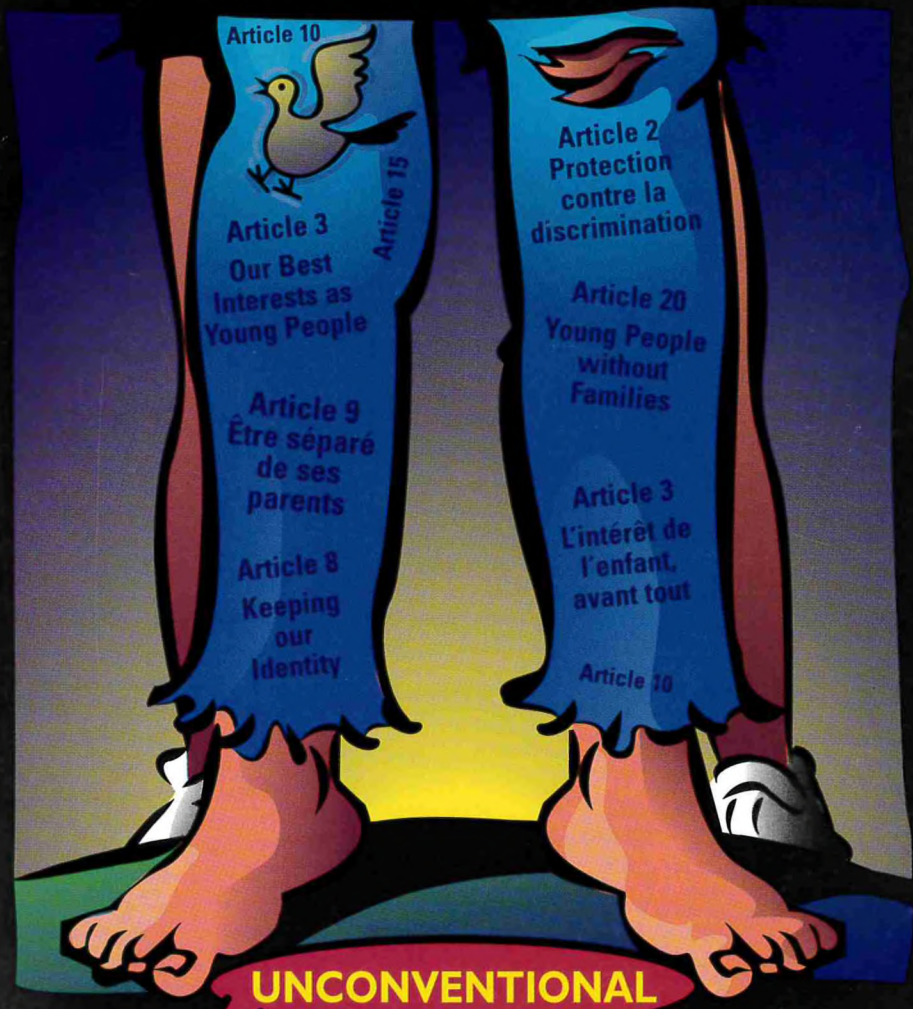


SAY IT RIGHT!



UNCONVENTIONAL

THE CANADIAN YOUTH EDITION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION
ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
HRE/CHILD/SS/7

21004

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**BY THE YOUTH PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE, CANADIAN
COALITION FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

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HRE/CHILD/SS/17

WARNING***

SAY IT RIGHT! MAY CONTAIN

INFORMATION



The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international agreement that applies to the lives of young people all over the world. In *Say it Right! The Unconventional UN Convention*, you will find information about your rights, as well as about the realities that other youth are living in Canada and around the world.

While *Say it Right!* doesn't talk about all the issues in detail, it gives you to learn more about the different rights you have. In each section, you find lots of books, magazines, computer networks, videos and youth groups that can help you continue your information search.

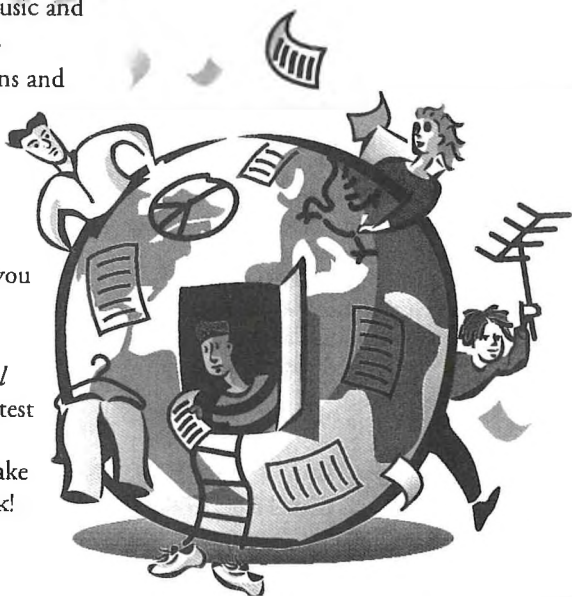
INFORMATION

If you had a room of your own and it needed some work, you might put up posters, play some of your music and hang up your favorite clothes in the closet.

If you just got a new pair of jeans and they're a bit stiff, you might wash and bleach them and sew on some patches. That way you can make them your own!

If you had a new pair of shoes and they were giving you blisters, you might use them to work them in by walking or jogging on your street.

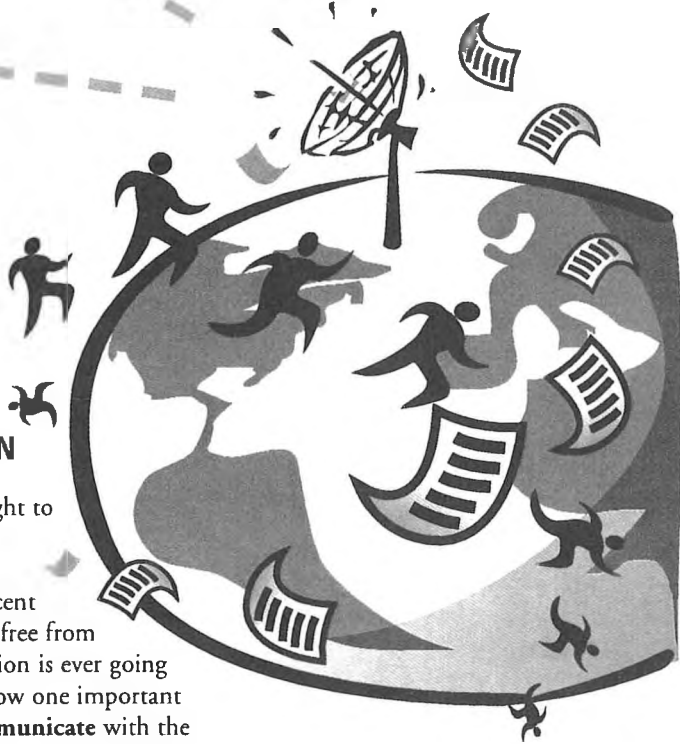
Say it Right! The Unconventional UN Convention is an invitation to test out your ideas and new UN rights. Make it your own! Take ownership and see what you think!



SOME OF THE FOLLOWING MESSAGES!

COMMUNICATION

So, we have the right to be listened to, to play a part in who we become, to have a decent level of life and to be free from harm. If the Convention is ever going to fit, we need to follow one important rule: we need to **communicate** with the people around us. Our friends, family, teachers and governments can all help us exercise our rights better in many situations. We need to let them know when they are helping us, and if they aren't, what they can do differently. So let them hear you Say it Right!



Burning Questions You Always Wanted to Know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Q:

What is it?

A:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international human rights treaty about young people. It was accepted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and ratified by Canada in 1991. It is made up of 41 articles about the rights of young people, one article about public awareness and education and twelve articles on how to monitor, ratify and enforce the Convention. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been adopted by more countries than any other international human rights treaty. By January 1996, 187 countries had signed or ratified it.

Q:

So, what is a child according to the Convention?

A:

When the UN says "child" they mean all young people under 18, except when the age of majority is reached earlier. Article 1 of the Convention tells us this.

Q:

How does the Convention work?

A:

Although the Convention is not a Canadian law, the principles of the Convention must be reflected in Canadian legislation, policies and programs. Governments must also submit regular reports to the United Nations on their progress in implementing the Convention. The reporting system puts pressure on governments to respect the rights of young people.

Q:

Does a UN Convention make any difference in our lives?

A:

By ratifying it, governments commit to respect the rights of people under 18 to participate in decisions that affect them, to reach their potential, to survive and to be protected from harm. Article 4 says that when governments adopt the Convention, they will take "all appropriate measures" to practise it. It also says that when they act on our economic, social and cultural rights, governments agree to do the maximum they can with what's available to them. Once we know what the Convention says and means, we can work to guarantee that these rights will be the rules that will determine how young people are treated.

DEFINITIONS

Convention:

A list of standards on issues that affect people around the world. Conventions can also be called treaties.

Ratification:

An action by the government of a state that formally adopts a convention. A convention becomes legally binding at the international level when a country ratifies it.

Signature:

An action that means a government intends to ratify a convention. It is not legally binding.

State Party:

A country that has signed or ratified a treaty.

Q:

Why have a youth edition of the Convention?

A:

The version of the Convention that was passed by the General Assembly and ratified by Canada is a legal document that is written in technical language. If young people are going to understand their rights and responsibilities, we need to start by putting things like the Convention in our own words. On top of this, article 42 of the Convention says that it is the responsibility of governments to make young people aware of their rights in different and active ways. No doubt, a youth-written version of the UN Convention is different and active, and it will make more of us aware of the rights we have.

Adapted from ICCB
News, 1992, no. 2, p. 8.

Q: After all this talk about rights, what about our responsibilities?

A: Rights and responsibilities can't be separated. The UN Convention talks about the rights that have been guaranteed to young people by governments. For any relationship to work—between friends, within families, in schools, sports teams or countries—we have to remember that we owe some things to other people and they owe things to us. These basic things that we owe to others include respect and tolerance. The UN Convention describes the basic things that governments owe to people under 18 years old.

Q: What rights are covered in the Convention?

A: The Convention can be divided into four groups of rights:

I. Playing a Part means being included in decisions, freedom to join with others, freedom to express ourselves and freedom to receive information from lots of sources.

II. Reaching our Potential includes the things we need to develop as best we can. This group lists the importance of education, family, culture and identity in our lives.

III. Living Well: Our Right to Survival includes all our more basic needs. This includes food and shelter, our standard of living and our health.

IV. Being Free from Harm allows for young people to be protected from many things, including abuse, neglect, economic exploitation, torture, abduction and prostitution.

I. PLAYING A PART: OUR RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Article 3

Our Best Interests as Young People

In all decisions which concern us, our best interests should be considered first and foremost. Also, governments have the responsibility to make sure that institutional standards are respected so that we are always adequately cared for and protected.

Get involved! Learn about youth participation

Changing the Way Things Work: A Young People's Guide to Social Action. Canadian Mental Health Association, 1992.

Call (416) 484-7750 or write to 2160 Yonge Street, 3rd Floor, Toronto, ON, M4S 2Z3 for a copy.

The Youth Action Handbook. Canadian Youth Foundation and Generation 2000, 1993. Call (416) 777-2590 or write to Suite 500, 347 Bay Street, Toronto, ON, M5H 2R3 for a copy.

Directory of Youth Organizations and Programs in Canada. Canadian Youth Foundation, 1995. Consult your local library for a copy.

Répertoire des organismes jeunesse, édition 1996, Conseil permanent de la jeunesse, Gouvernement du Québec. Call (418) 644-9595 or write 580, boul. Grande Allée est, bureau 440, Québec, QC, G1R 2K2.

Raised Voices. Video on youth action around the world. For a copy, call or write your provincial UNICEF office or contact UNICEF Canada, 443 Mount Pleasant Road, Toronto, ON, M4S 2L8, (416) 482-4444.



Article 12

Having our Opinions Heard

We have the right to make our views known in decisions that affect us, and in particular in any court or administrative proceedings that are important to us. As we become older, our views should be taken more and more into consideration.

Article 13

Our Freedom to Express Ourselves

We have the right to express ourselves and to receive or send information through any media, including print, art or word of mouth. We have the responsibility to express ourselves in a way that respects the rights and reputations of other people.



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Article 14 Our Freedom of Conscience and Religion

We have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Governments must respect the rights and duties of our parents or guardians in giving us direction when we need to exercise these rights.

Article 15 Our Freedom of Association

We have the right to meet with others, and to join or start our own associations. We have the responsibility to exercise this right in a way that respects the rights, health and safety of others.

Article 16 Our Freedom from Invasions of Privacy

We have the right to be free from invasions on our privacy, our family, our home or our correspondence with others. We also have the right to be free from attacks on our reputation and honour.

ents have the responsibility to make sure that information and material is
o us from many sources, both national and international, especially when
at promoting our well-being and health.

WHY NOT READ A CANADIAN YOUTH MAGAZINE?

M-zine. Environmental Youth Alliance, Vancouver. Call (604) 873-4825 for
formation, or write to box 34097, Station D, Vancouver, BC, V6J 4M1.

azine. The Voice of Today's Generation. Call (416) 597-8297, write to 70
ity Avenue, Suite 1050, Toronto, ON, M5J 2M4, or e-mail to tgmag@tgmag.ca.

ction Forum. Youth Action Network. Call (416) 368-2277 or write to 100
e Street West, Suite 906, Toronto, ON, M5H 1S3.

electronic hook-up?

M Youth Rights Computer Network. Call or write the Canadian Coalition for
nts of Children, #339-180 Argyle Avenue, Ottawa, ON, (613) 788-5085, to learn
get hooked.

II. REACHING OUR POTENTIAL: OUR RIGHT TO DEVELOP WHO WE ARE

Article 5

Respect for Parents

Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents, extended family and guardians in giving us guidance and direction when we exercise our rights.

Article 7

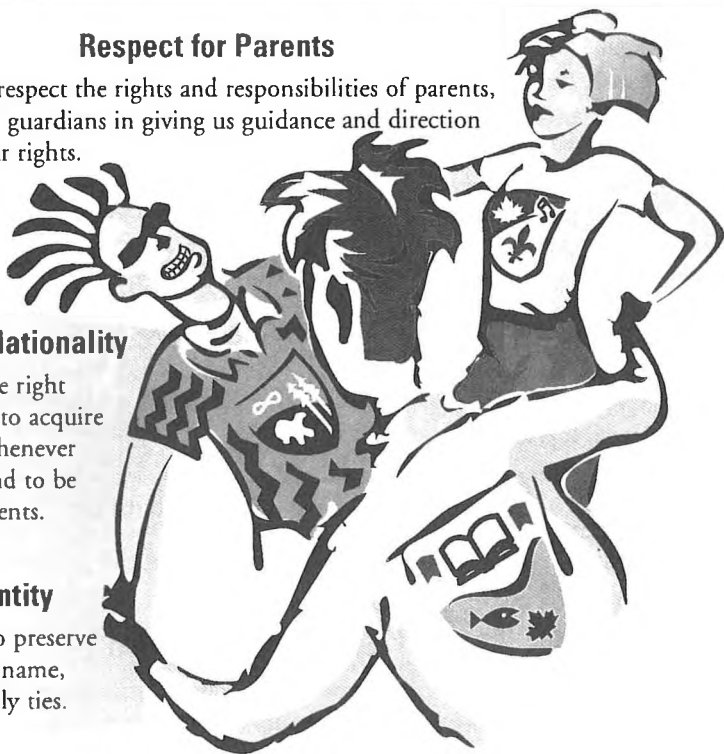
Our Name and Nationality

At birth, we have the right to be given a name, to acquire a nationality and, whenever possible, to know and to be cared for by our parents.

Article 8

Keeping our Identity

We have the right to preserve and re-establish our name, nationality and family ties.



Personal Story: My Name, my Family and Myself

My name is Magda Exentus-Delorme. I was born in Montreal and I'm 17 years old.

Magda Exentus-Delorme – my name attracts a lot of attention: people are always curious to find out exactly where I come from. With a name that sounds different, it seems that it's sometimes hard to be accepted.

What makes my name different, I suppose, is that it's a cross between a "traditional" Québécois name and a "typical" Haitian name. This is because my mother is Haitian and my father is Québécois. However, I am not of mixed blood.

I was adopted by Gilles Delorme at the age of four, when he married my mother. I am his daughter, though, in spite of the racial differences that "separate" us. My father has never made any difference between me and my brother, who is their biological son. Only external pressures serve to remind us that we are different in some way, however minimal. These pressures can be very strong and very painful. People look at us with curiosity when we walk down the street together. And when he comes to pick me up for the first time at a dance class or a friend's house, we sometimes get disapproving looks. Because he's white, people often think my father is my boyfriend! That always makes us laugh.

I'm lucky to have such a strong and united family circle. My parents have always tried to strengthen my self-esteem. Thanks to my mother, who must have told me the story of Haiti at least a thousand times, I'll never forget who my ancestors are. Thanks to my father, I know that I'm at home here in Montreal. He has given me the pride of the Québécois people. My identity is made up of all these things, which often come from my parents. I share their names, their cultures, their histories, their nationality – a part of each of their identities, in short. But don't forget that another part comes from me. My name is Magda Exentus-Delorme – Magda, that's me.

When I look at my father, I don't necessarily see a white man who's different from me, but my father: a part of myself. As he often says, "it's all a matter of how you look at it".

Article 10

Family Reunification

If we need to enter or leave a country to be reunited with our families, governments have the responsibility to deal with our case quickly and humanely. Also, if our parents live in another country, we have the right to have personal and direct contact with them.

Learn about Sustainable Development.

Read *Rescue Mission Planet Earth: A Children's Edition of Agenda 21*. Peace Child International, 1994.

Article 21 Being Adopted

In countries where adoption is allowed, it must reflect our best interests as young people and be supervised by competent authorities. If the adoption takes place between countries, governments have the responsibility to ensure that standards are equivalent to adoptions within one country.

Personal Story: The right to live in a safe and happy home.

Hi, my name is Cassandra Umbach. I'm 18 years old and I live in Ottawa. Because I came from an abusive foster home to a safe adoptive family, I feel that every young person, regardless of whether or not they have a disability, should have a safe home. I was born with cerebral palsy.

I was in my foster home for about five years, from the age of five until the age of ten. During that time, I remember going to school and wondering why everyone else was looking forward to going home, when I dreaded going home and would have preferred to stay at school.

When I went to school I couldn't focus on my work because I was so distraught. When I was ten years old, I was adopted by the Umbachs into a safe and happy home and I remember feeling so angry that I even had to go through what I did, and that there were other children still suffering and nobody was doing anything about it. So then I decided to do something about it. With the help of my new adoptive parents, we got in touch with the Children's Aid Society of Ontario and tried to help out.

Since then, I'm an honour roll student and I do a lot of different activities, like skiing, and right now I'm trying to get into the vocal programme at my high school.

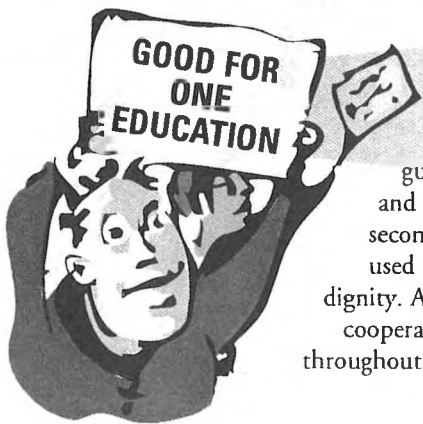
Anybody should be able to live in a safe home, and if it means telling people about the problem, you'll learn that there are people out there who will listen, and who can give you the help you need.



Article 23

Disabled Young People

If we are disabled, we have the right to special care and education that will help us achieve self-reliance and enjoy a full life in society.



Article 28 Our Education

We have the right to education. Governments have the responsibility to guarantee that primary education is compulsory and free of charge, that we all have equal access to secondary and higher education and that discipline used in our schools does not go against our human dignity. Also, governments will encourage international cooperation to help eliminate ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world, and help us have access to science, technology and modern teaching methods.

Article 29 The Goals of our Education

We have the right to an education aimed at:

- developing our own personalities and abilities, both mental and physical;
- preparing us to become responsible members of a free society;
- developing respect for our parents or guardians, for human rights, for the environment and for the cultural and national values of ourselves and others.

Think about the School to Work Transition.

Read *Reality Check: Youth to Youth Perspectives on School and Work*. Generation 2000. 1993. For a copy, call (416) 777-2590 or write Suite 500, 347 Bay Street, Toronto, ON, M5H 2R3.

Article 30 Being from a Minority Group

If we are members of a minority or indigenous group, we have the right to enjoy our culture, practice our own religion and speak our own language.



III. LIVING WELL: OUR RIGHT TO SURVIVAL

Article 6 **Our Survival and Development**

As young people, we have the right to life. Also, governments have the responsibility to ensure our survival and development to the maximum extent possible.

Article 9 **Separation from our Parents**

We have the right to live with our parents and not to be separated from them, unless this goes against our best interests. In any hearings or proceedings concerning a separation, we have the right to make our views known. We also have the right to keep in contact with both of our parents. If the separation comes from a government decision, it must provide us with information on our parents' whereabouts.

Article 18 **Responsibility of Parents and Guardians**

Both of our parents or guardians are responsible for our upbringing, and this responsibility belongs to them before anyone else. The government will support our parents in bringing us up and make sure that child care is available for working parents.



Article 24 Health and Health Care

We have the right to the highest level of health and medical care attainable. Governments have the responsibility to combat child mortality levels, ensure medical assistance to young people, fight malnutrition and disease, guarantee health care for new and expectant mothers, make health education available, develop preventive health care and abolish traditional harmful practices.



Article 25 In Care, Review of our Placement

If we are placed by the authorities under protection, care or treatment, we have the right to a regular review of that placement.

Article 26 Our Social Security

We have the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance. These benefits will be distributed in relation to the resources and circumstances of ourselves and our parents or guardians.

Article 27 Our Standard of Living

We have the right to an adequate standard of living for our physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social well-being. Our parents or guardians have the primary responsibility to make sure that our standard of living is acceptable. The government has a responsibility to assist parents or guardians who are not able to provide their children with this standard.

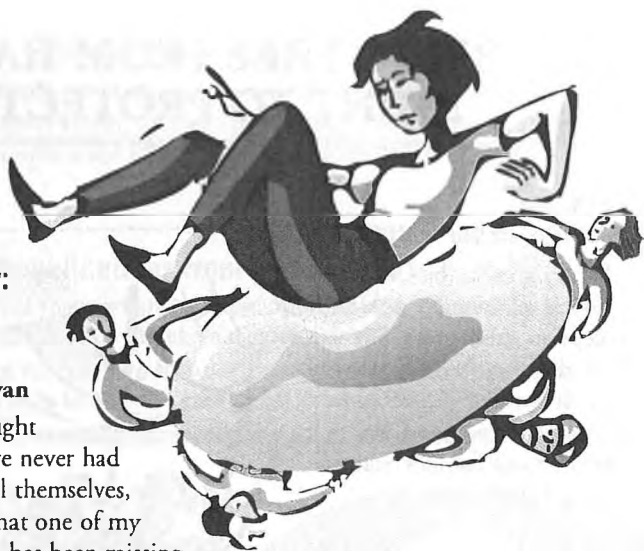
Learn about the lives of young people around the world.

The State of the World's Children 'map', UNICEF-Canada. Call or write your province's UNICEF office to order, or contact UNICEF Canada, 443 Mount Pleasant Road, Toronto, ON, M4S 2L8, (416) 482-4444.

Personal Story: Suicide

by Christy Hook
Oxbow, Saskatchewan

I've never really thought about suicide before, I've never had someone close to me kill themselves, but today I found out that one of my really good friends, who has been missing for a few days, was found dead and they suspect he shot himself. I find this really hard to deal with because, of course, the first thing you think of is, why didn't I spend more time with him, why didn't I try to help him? My friend had always been kind of a lost soul, he didn't have a very good home life so he'd always be running away or staying with friends. He was the nicest guy in the world, never ever was mean or rude. But it seemed like he was always searching for a place to be accepted. He just needed someone to talk to and be there for him and I guess he couldn't always find them. He was really good friends with my brother and he'd phone or come over looking for him. If Jer wasn't here, he would always sound so disappointed. I really feel for the guy and I wish he could have found the sense of belonging that most of us have. I just wish he could have been at school today to see how many people were upset with the news and to see how many people cared for him....



Article 31

Leisure and Recreation

We have the right to leisure and recreation, and to participate freely in cultural and artistic activities.

Article 41

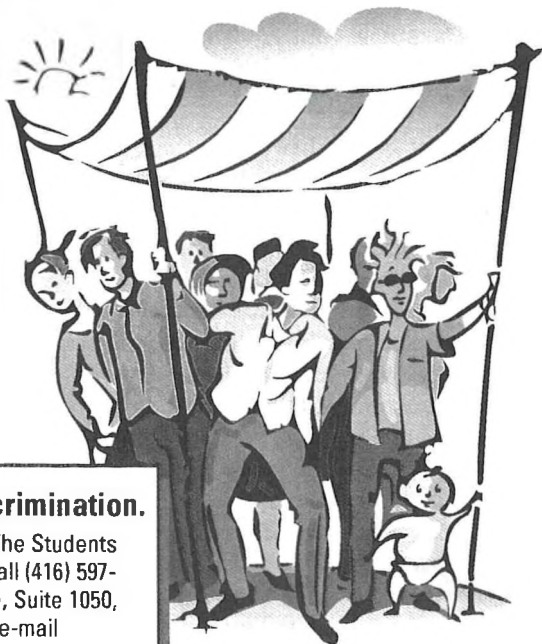
Higher Standards are Superior

If standards of national or international laws are superior to this Convention, the higher standards will always apply.

IV. BEING FREE FROM HARM: OUR RIGHT TO PROTECTION

Article 2 Freedom from Discrimination

All the rights in the Convention apply to all young people without exception. Also, governments have the responsibility to make sure that we are protected from discrimination and punishment based on our families' status, origin, beliefs, etc.



Hear youth talk about discrimination.

Read *Nobody's Born a Racist*, The Students Commission, 1993. For a copy, call (416) 597-8297, write 70 University Avenue, Suite 1050, Toronto, ON, M5J 2M4 or e-mail tgmag@tgmag.ca.

Article 11 Kidnapping and Holding of Young People

Governments have a responsibility to combat the kidnapping or holding of young people in foreign countries, either by a parent or by any other person.

Article 19 Abuse and Neglect

We have the right to be protected from all abuse, mental and physical violence, neglect and exploitation while we are under the care of anyone who is responsible for us. We also have the right to learn how to prevent and treat this abuse.

Article 20

Young People without Families

If we are deprived of a family environment, we have the right to special protection and assistance from our government, and we are entitled to alternative family or institutional care which respects our ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

Read publications from youth in care.

The Slice. BC Federation of Youth in Care Networks. Call (604) 689-3204 or write to 2nd floor, 1280 Seymour Street, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3N9.

The Networker. National Youth in Care Network, Ottawa. Call (613) 230-8945 for more information, or write to #607-251 Bank Street, Ottawa, ON, K2P 1X3.

Article 22

Young Refugees

If we are refugees, forced to leave our country to avoid persecution, or if we are seeking refugee status, we are entitled to special protection and assistance from governments.

Article 32 Child Labour

We have the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from any work that is a threat to our health, education and development. Our government has the responsibility to set a minimum age for employment, make rules about hours and conditions of work, and establish penalties for enforcement of these rules.



Personal Story: Child Labour, by Craig Kielburger.

Craig is 13 years old and lives in Thornhill, Ontario. With his friends, he began a group called Free the Children, to stop the practice of bonded labour among young people.

It is only when we put a human face on the suffering of children that we really understand how important is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I was able to better understand how children all over the world must work together for their rights when I visited South Asia this year. While I was there, Kailash Satyarthi, a social activist working to help free children enslaved in bonded labour,

led a raid on a carpet factory in which 21 children were rescued. These children had been tricked into thinking that they were going to a training school to learn how to make carpets. They were even told that they would be paid while learning this trade. Instead, they were taken to another state far away from their homes and forced to work 14 hours a day for 25 cents a day. They had to give the twenty five cents back to the carpet owner in exchange for one bowl of rice and dal, which is all that they were fed for the day. One nine year old boy, who had been working at the factory for three years, showed me a deep scar across the top of his head where he had been hit with an iron bar by the loom master for making a mistake. Another nine year old boy, Munilal, told me how he would go to bed crying at night because he missed his mother so much. He couldn't cry during the day because the loom master would beat him for not doing his work. So he would speak to his mother in his dreams when he went to bed.

One of the highlights of my trip was when I was able to accompany these boys back to their homes after their rescue from the carpet factory. Munilal was with us. On the way home the boys began to chant and to clap their hands. I asked what the words of their song meant and I was told that they were singing "We are free. We are going home".

Finally, we reached Munilal's village. I'll never forget the feeling I had inside of me when I saw Munilal and his mother embrace. They looked at one another for a long time as she held him in her arms. She was so happy to see her boy again. Munilal was delighted because he knew that he would no longer have to wait until his dreams to speak to his mother.



Article 33

Protection from Narcotics

We have the right to be protected from the use of illegal drugs, and from being involved in their production and distribution.

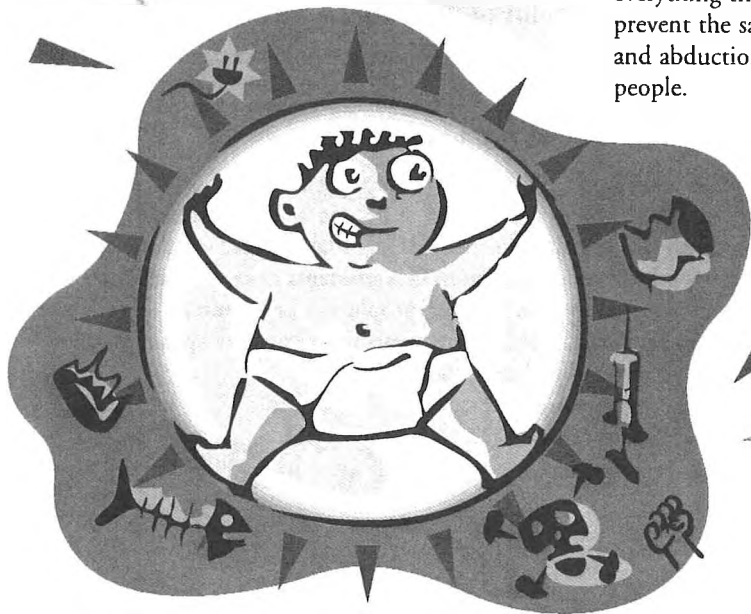
Article 34

Protection from Sexual Exploitation

We have the right to be protected from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and pornography.

Article 35 Protection from Sale and Trafficking

Governments have the responsibility to do everything they can to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of young people.



Article 36 All Other Exploitation

We have the right to be protected against all other types of exploitation.

Article 37 Punishment and Detention

We have the right to be protected from torture, cruel treatment or punishment and unlawful arrest or other invasions of liberty. Our government has the responsibility to make sure that capital punishment and life imprisonment are prohibited for young people. If our liberty is taken away, we have the right to be treated with humanity and respect, to be kept separated from adults, to keep contact with our families and to receive legal assistance.

Article 38

Wars and Armed Conflicts

If we are under the age of fifteen, we have the right to be excluded from any direct part in wars and armed conflicts. If we are affected by armed conflict, our government has the responsibility to provide us with special protection and care.

Article 39

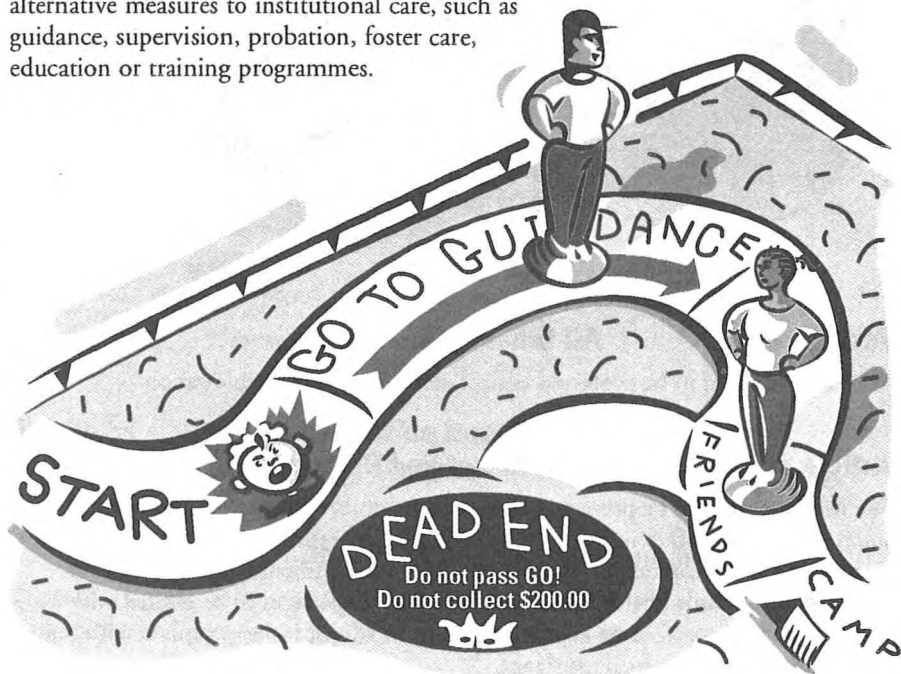
Rehabilitative Care

If we have experienced armed conflict, torture, neglect or exploitation, we have the right to receive appropriate care for our recovery.

Article 40

Young People and Justice

If we are accused of breaking the law, we have the right to be treated with dignity, to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, to be told of the charges made against us, to have an interpreter if needed, to receive a fair trial, to have our privacy respected and to appeal the court's decision. Governments have the responsibility to establish a minimum age below which young people will be presumed not to have the capacity to break penal law. Also, governments must consider appropriate alternative measures to institutional care, such as guidance, supervision, probation, foster care, education or training programmes.



Don't be unconventional.

Learn more about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Convention on the Rights of the Child. Copies available in English and French from Communications Branch, Human Rights Directorate, Canadian Heritage, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0M5, or call (819) 997-0055.

Children Have Rights Too!, Defence for Children International-Canada. For a copy, call (905) 319-0615 or write to P.O. Box 400 Postal Station "F", Toronto, ON, M4Y 2L7.

Rights Now!: A Workshop Kit on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, 1992. For a copy, call (613) 788-5085 or write #339-180 Argyle Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K2P 1B7.

It's Only Right!, UNICEF Education for Development Section, by Susan Fountain. Call or write your province's UNICEF office to order, or contact UNICEF Canada, 443 Mount Pleasant Road, Toronto, ON, M4S 2L8, (416) 482-4444.

My City. CD-ROM and Web site. *I Choose Me: Interactive Children's Media.* For a copy, call the School Division, McGraw-Hill Ryerson at (905) 428-2222, or write to 300 Water Street, Whitby, ON, L1N 9B6.

Hands Up! an interactive handbook on Children's Rights Education, 1996. Contact International Programmes, YMCA Montréal, 1441 Drummond St., Montréal, QC, H3G 1W3, or phone (514) 849-5331.

The Canadian Resource Centre on Children and Youth has 15 years of information on youth-related subjects like health, child welfare, culture, law and aboriginal issues. You can visit the Resource Centre at Suite 316, 180 Argyle Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1B7, or contact them at (613) 788-5102 or at crccy@magi.com. The Resource Centre is a program of the Child Welfare League of Canada.

