

Youth Council

CONTACT

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Year awarded: 2025

Project timeline: January 2024 – Present

Project video: <https://youtu.be/lr5pbp42FY>

THE PRACTICE

What was the issue?

Historically, the youth have been a community that the City of Melville council has struggled to engage with. The City's strategic plan includes a goal of engaging with the youth to bridge this communication gap.

What was the project?

Once approved by council and proper changes were made to the Council Procedures Bylaw a Terms of Reference (TOR) was developed, along with an application to form the council. Meetings of the Youth Council are held bi-monthly, prior to city council's meetings so that the youth can review the agenda. A member of council attends the youth council meetings to gain input directly from the group, and the youth Mayor attends all regular council meetings to share input from the youth.

The youth council delivers programs that foster community connection, leadership development, recreation, and wellness for youth. Some of these initiatives include the creation of a holiday store, an annual colour run, a school supply drive, cooking courses and puzzle afternoons with seniors, and the opening of Oasis 2.0, a welcoming safe space for youth to hang out and participate in activities at no cost. The Youth Council continues to grow each year.

THE PROCESS

Who was involved:

- *Municipal council*
- *Municipal administration*

There is a high school teacher who is a part of council, Mr. Rondeau (councillor and teacher), which provided immense help with the recruiting process for the first youth council. Two recruiting meetings are held each year at the high school, making it easy for students that are curious about youth council

to attend, eat pizza, and ask questions of the existing youth council, Mr. Rondeau, or the city manager. At each Youth Council meeting the group aims to have a delegate attend to do a presentation to the youth members to help them to better understand the municipality and its responsibilities.

The youth council is run by the city manager and one other member of the management team. They help guide the youth council to understand city operation, municipal responsibilities, and work through real-life examples as a group. The youth regularly meet with the city management team to learn more about their responsibilities in each area and to get a better understanding of why the city does, or does not do, certain things. For example, the youth council asked “why can’t we just repave all the roads?” and the group was able to demonstrate the costs, and the impact that would have on rate payers.

The youth council and the initiatives that they undertake continue to grow and expand each year. When the council first started there was one member, it increased to five, and now there are twelve members. This forced the structure of the Youth Council to expand to include seven council members in executive positions, with the remaining members assigned to sub committees. The group has participated in strategic planning sessions to help the youth council define their plans for each year. In 2025 the three main pillars were:

- 1. Recreation and youth*
- 2. Economic development*
- 3. Technology*

Most of the initiatives that the Youth Council provides are funded through grant programming and sponsorship.

Challenges Faced:

When the Youth Council was first developed, there was an application form that had to be completed and only one completed application was received when the program started. After speaking with some students, it was discovered that the application form was acting as a barrier to participation as students found it to be a turn off due to the amount of time it took for them to complete it. The application form was waived for the first year and key changes were made for future years to eliminate this barrier.

THE RESULTS

The Youth Council has an incredible effect on the community, with the community championing the council and supporting its initiatives wholeheartedly. The Melville Youth Council has committed to provide safe, inclusive and engaging programming for youth in their community and strives to deliver programming that fosters community connection, leadership development, recreation and wellness. Comments from the community highlight their amazement at the number of youth who attend and the value they bring to the conversations.

LESSONS LEARNED

Be flexible! Working with youth who are extremely involved in the school and extracurricular activities can be challenging. We suggest being flexible and setting expectations helps to encourage participation. The group also set a one-hour time limit on meetings so that youth know the time commitment when signing up.