

# Young Global Citizens in Action

It's one thing to provide youth with information about the world around them – but it's another thing altogether to have them take the reins and initiate change.

We can all admit to feelings of hopelessness when confronted with the global issues we hear about every day. Media coverage always seems to clearly present the problem, but never potential solutions or ways to take action. As a consequence, youth are often asked to care about the world around them, but not empowered to do something about it.

When provided with options, however, youth have the power and energy to make significant change in their local and global community. In Gimli, Manitoba a group of High School students known as the Youth Community Partnership is changing the way their town looks at consumption and sustainability. In 2008 and 2009, the group worked closely with MCIC to get Gimli recognized as a Fair Trade Town – the first in Manitoba. As part of this process, the youth engaged the town council, garnered support in the community and committed to promoting ongoing fair trade initiatives, including a recent fundraiser to purchase fair trade sports equipment for Gimli High School. The Youth Community Partnership has also been involved in distributing water efficiency kits to Gimli residents in an effort to cut back on water consumption and waste.

These projects were made possible because the youth feel empowered through the support provided to them through their school, the Gimli Town Council and organizations like the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) that put a focus on taking action. For the past three years, thanks to the request of the Youth Community Partnership, the Gimli Town Council nominates a youth representative to serve as a voice in the community. "It's crucial to create an environment where youth have influence and voice," says MCIC Executive Director Janice Hamilton. "Change is possible, and the earlier people learn that they have that power, the more likely they will be to do great things."

MCIC is also involved in engaging Middle Years students and empowering them to take action through our annual *Generating Momentum for Our World* conferences. In 2009, students from École Morden Middle School were so inspired after attending the conference they decided to raise awareness by making a movie on global water issues and holding a rally in their school.

To recognize young global citizens who are leaders in their schools and communities, MCIC gives out a Global Citizen Award to selected Grade 12 students. Participating schools are asked to nominate one student who has volunteered their time to help make the world a better place.

For more information on any of these initiatives, educational resources or to sign up for MCIC's Teacher E Newsletter, please contact us at (204) 987 6420 or [mcic@web.ca](mailto:mcic@web.ca).

Visit our website at [www.mcic.ca](http://www.mcic.ca) for more ideas on how youth can take action and profiles of young global citizens.