

BC Children and Youth
Connection Society



Société de Connexion des
Enfants et des Jeunes de la C.B.

International Youth Forum (IYF) 2026

Hosted by BC Children & Youth Connection Society, the International Youth Forum (IYF) is a youth-led platform that fosters global dialogue, diverse perspective-taking, and collective reflection.

Founded in 2017 and based in British Columbia, Canada, BC-Youth is a youth-led organization dedicated to supporting the growth and learning journeys of children and young people. Its work is guided by the principles of inclusion, understanding, equity, and accessibility.

2026 Theme: Learning, Cognition, and Neurodiversity

Exploring cognition, emotion, social psychology, and neurodiversity in youth.

Date: August 29, 2026

Time: 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Where: Online via a given Zoom invitation

Cognition: How We Think, Learn, and Decide

As students, we face cognitive-related challenges such as difficulty concentrating, fatigue from decision-making, productivity concerns, and uncertainty about the future. These are not concepts confined to the mental sphere. They affect academic performance, motivation, and daily choices.

The forum examines questions such as:

- Why is sustained focus becoming more difficult due to our current digital environment?
- How does stress make us view small problems as overwhelming?
- Why do we work hard but still feel unproductive?
- Why does decision-making feel increasingly stressful?

- How do certain factors like AI usage, short-form content, social media, and gaming affect our attention and cognition?

We will be discussing the process behind focus, mental overload, dopamine reward mechanisms, learning strategies, and emotional regulation. In a time when we face constant stimulation and consume algorithm-driven content, the way we focus, plan long-term, and think independently is being reshaped.

Cognition will be discussed using real-life experiences that will help us learn how we study, judge, and understand ourselves.

Emotion: Pressure, Comparison, and Regulation

Our academic expectations and self-comparisons strongly shape our emotional lives. Young people often experience anxiety before exams, accumulation of stress, burnout, and fear of failure.

The forum addresses questions such as:

- Is it normal for us to feel nervous before important tasks?
- Why does pressure affect our performance?
- When managing emotions, should we regulate or suppress them?
- How does having a social media presence and online comparison affect self-esteem?
- Does constantly connecting with others make emotional rest harder?

We will examine how emotions are generated, regulated, and intensified in digital and competitive environments. Emotions are central to our identities, resilience, and decision-making.

Social Psychology: Belonging and Social Influence

Social circles, school environments, and online communities are major contributors to the average youth's development. Social settings influence confidence, behavior, and self-perception.

Key questions include:

- Why is it difficult for us to speak up in groups?
- Why do we constantly compare ourselves to others?
- How do school culture and social media affect the pressure we feel?
- How can we feel like we belong without losing our authenticity?

We will explore comparison to social media, group influence, and the impact that digital platforms have on our beliefs and behavior.

Beyond the Silence | Neurodivergent Youth: Mental Health, Challenges, and Belonging

For many neurodivergent youth, challenges often arise not in academic performance, but in mental health, social participation, and the feeling of belonging. Research indicates that 78% of autistic children and adolescents experience at least one co-occurring mental health condition, compared to 14% of their non-autistic peers. Differences in communication, social pressures, sensory environments, and the experience of being misunderstood can shape well-being, relationships, and participation opportunities.

The forum examines questions such as:

- Why are anxiety, loneliness, and emotional distress so common among neurodivergent youth?
- Why can communication feel exhausting even when connection is a common goal?
- Why do some young people feel excluded despite being surrounded by peers?
- Why do environments that work well for some students create barriers for others?

- How do AI usage, gaming, social media, and digital communities shape connection, identity, and the feeling of belonging?
- This forum will explore the relationship between mental health, communication, and social belonging. Instead of viewing neurodiversity as a lack of something, we examine how different approaches to things influence mental well-being and development.

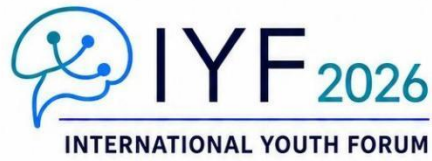
During the forum, two ongoing youth-led research projects will present their findings:

- Autism Awareness
- Understanding Communication in School: Interpretation of Communication Across Neurodiverse Minds

Mental health is not just an individual issue but an experience shaped by our relationships and the environments we live in. In a world largely designed around neurotypical norms, this forum asks how neurodivergent youth navigate challenges, build connections, and find belonging.

We warmly invite experts, educators, youth representatives, sponsors, and collaborators to join us.

Contact: bcyouthsince2017@gmail.com



2026 INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM (IYF)

Healthy Minds:

Learning, Emotions,
Social Life, and Neurodiversity

**CALL FOR EXPERTS, EDUCATORS,
RESEARCHERS, AND YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES,
SPONSORS, EVENT PLANNERS
& COLLABORATORS.**



**Saturday,
August 29, 2026**



**9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Vancouver Time (PDT)**



Online via Zoom



Website bc-youth.com/youth-forum-2026



Contact bacyouthsince2017@gmail.com

Scan to Register



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Additional Website Content

The 2026 International Youth Forum (IYF)

- The 2026 International Youth Forum is a youth-led event that invites students from diverse backgrounds to explore issues that shape the mental health and well-being of today's youth.
- Since 2021, our annual International Youth Forum has connected youth and speakers from Canada, the United States, Singapore, and South Africa for interdisciplinary dialogue on issues that matter to young people and how we can turn ideas into action.
- This year's theme, **Healthy Minds: Learning, Emotions, and Social Life**, dives into how learning, emotions, relationships, and social environments influence the mental health and everyday experiences of our youth. The forum will explore topics like stress, anxiety, social connection, digital lives, and artificial intelligence. To better understand the opportunities and challenges that young people face in a rapidly changing time, we will examine cognitive, developmental, and social psychology.
- The forum will also explore the mental health and lived experiences of neurodivergent youth, examining the real-world challenges they face in learning, communication, participation in social environments, and relationships. We will discuss how greater understanding, inclusion, and helping others feel like they belong can help create a more supportive educational and social world.
- With interdisciplinary dialogue, research presentations, and inquiry, participants are encouraged to better understand themselves and others, further their awareness of mental health and human diversity, and explore ways to support the well-being and healthy development of our youth.

What This Forum Explores

- Mental Health and Well-Being
- Learning, Cognition, and Decision-Making
- Emotions, Stress, and Resilience
- Social Relationships and Belonging
- Youth Development in the Digital Age
- AI, Social Media, and Technology
- Neurodiversity and Inclusion
- Communication, Understanding, and Participation

What You Will Experience

- Youth-Led Research Presentations
- Perspectives from Psychology and Social Sciences
- Conversations on Mental Health and Well-Being
- Exploration of Neurodiversity and Inclusion
- Reflection on Learning, Emotions, and Social Life
- Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Shared Inquiry

Expression Formats and Duration

While PowerPoint presentations will be the primary format, participants are also encouraged to express their ideas and values through a variety of creative forms, including news broadcasts, interviews, poetry, drama, animation, storytelling, documentaries, posters, artwork, skits, music, songs, short films, debates, podcasts, and photography.

Participation

- We welcome applications from individuals, experts, teams, youth clubs, schools, nonprofits, organizations, professionals, educators, parents, researchers, community leaders, policymakers, and volunteers worldwide.
- Whether you join as a participant or as a representative of your community, you will engage with diverse perspectives and contribute to developing more thoughtful and effective ways of understanding and communicating, helping to foster greater inclusion and equity.

- **Contact us at: bcyouthsince2017@gmail.com**

Contact

If you are interested in joining as an individual representative, team, non-profit, campaign, school, or club, please reach out at **bcyouthsince2017@gmail.com** for further inquiries. Your voice helps us understand you better.

Questions?

Please reach out to the contacts below if you have any questions or need clarification. Our team is happy to help and we'd love to see you and your team at the IYF 2026!

- **BC Youth HR Leadership Team – IYF Responders**
bcyouthsince2017@gmail.com