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News / Vancouver

Vote PopUp simulates the voting experience to make it easier for first-time voters

Here's a look at some of the various initiatives and events that are trying to get young people to vote in Tuesday's provincial election.

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METRO FILE

Vote PopUp is encouraging people to think about why they should vote, rather than telling them to vote.

By: Amy Logan Metro Published on Thu May 04 2017

Encouraging hard-to-reach people to vote requires some finesse.

Vote PopUp aims to demystify the voting process for "first-time or infrequent voters."

The Vote PopUp toolkit is a free download designed to stimulate interest in the election process by allowing community groups the chance to "simulate voter experience by recreating a voting station," according to the website. Staff from community organizations, civic leaders and volunteers are trained to develop a more voter-centric approach, finding out what matters to often hidden demographics.

John Beebe, manager of outreach, said that one of the goals of Vote PopUp is getting people to "connect what they care about to the election." Partnering with community-based organizations which have existing programs, Vote PopUp targets harder to reach voters, such as "those who are not in school or are lower income as well as new Canadians," he said, "breaking down barriers to political participation."

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Beebe noted that it can be challenging to reach people who are not in school.

"There's a mythology that young people don't vote," but well-educated young people do, he said. It's the ones not in the education system who especially need to be reached. Carefully chosen places, like community centres or neighbourhood houses where people feel comfortable participating make a difference so potential voters don't fall through the cracks.

It's a "very different approach, rooted in the concept of democracy, the idea that people should be setting the agenda. Instead of us telling them to vote, we get them to think about why people should vote," said Beebe.

For the upcoming provincial election, Vote PopUp is partnering with Elections BC. Working with 30 community-based organizations, they have already set up 50 voter pop-ups.

Beebe pointed out that they "never tell people they should vote." Instead they "ask about the issues that matter to them." In the end, "Even the most skeptical people get engaged," he said.

Among the other initiatives encouraging people to vote was the recent [Not-A-Party Election Party](#), held at the Vancouver Mural Festival HQ, featured music, drinks, and dancing, hosted by [Gen Why](#) and the [Urban Worker Project](#).

As well, on May 8, the [Broadway Youth Resource Centre](#) will host [Get Out the Vote! A Pre-Election Party for Youth](#). With free food and activities, the event gives youth a chance to learn how to prepare for the vote. [Get Your Vote On](#) is a group focusses on inspiring 18-34 year olds to participate in elections by educating them about political parties, candidates and issues.

The [Alliance of BC Students](#) is spearheading a [Count on Our Vote](#) campaign to get students to pledge to vote as well as to simplify the process. [Integrity BC](#), a non-partisan organization, works on instilling a sense of trust and confidence between citizens and elected officials.



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