

## The 10 Faces of OJEN

### Jurrell Lewars-Munro



When Jurrell signed up for grade 11 Law at Oakwood Collegiate in Toronto last year, he didn't know what to expect. "Lawyers have this stereotype of being really boring and talking a long time", he observes. However, when his class took part in a four week research project with the Ontario Justice Education Network investigating the level of knowledge youth have about their legal rights, he gained a new respect for law, individuals' rights and Canada's justice system.

The project: Youth Rights: Who Knows What? involved designing and conducting a survey, analysing the results and developing recommendations about how to better inform youth about their legal rights.

His class chose to focus on five areas, Rights at School, Rights at Work, Rights On-line, Rights with the Police and Rights to Lawyers. They divided into five teams. Each group chose one of the topic areas and designed a survey to find out what their peers knew and wanted to know about their rights in that area. Then they posted the survey online and invited friends and schoolmates to complete it.

"It was actually a pretty cool experience," Jurrell recalls. "It wasn't like work at all. I enjoyed every bit of it."

By the time it wrapped up, two hundred people had taken the survey. Jurrell wasn't surprised by the findings; young people his age do not know very much about their rights or where to access information about them. "It confirmed what I already thought", he said. "But it was still disappointing."

With this information in hand, his class met with lawyers who specialized in their topic areas, learning from them what their rights and responsibilities actually consisted of and consulting with them on ways in which all young people could access this information more easily.

Their recommendations were thoughtful and imaginative. They included: creating the position of a Student Ombudsman at each school board to investigate potential rights infringements, training teachers to be able to provide accurate information about rights to students, and requiring websites catering to children and youth to advise them of privacy issues in plain language by pop-up windows or audio messages.

Last April, the class was given an opportunity to present their findings and recommendations at OJEN's Great Debate in front of an audience that included judges, government staff, lawyers and decision-makers.

