



Statement

May 30, 2022

For Immediate Release

Since 2011, we have honoured the diverse and extraordinary young people in care across B.C. during Youth in Care Week. As the province's Representative for Children and Youth, I have the privilege of meeting with and learning from many young people in and from care whose stories, insights, ideas and aspirations inform our priorities and actions at RCY. The strength, courage and resilience I witness from them is inspiring, to say the least.

Although we often 'celebrate' Youth in Care Week, we should remind ourselves that the reality of being in care is not easy for anyone. To be placed in care, away from your home and family can be a frightening and traumatizing experience at any age. Too often, the sense of belonging that these children and youth need – the key connections to culture, community, important relationships and physical spaces – is severed, which can have devastating long-term effects on their lives.

It is my hope that that through the work of our Office, our community partners and government, we can put the well-being of young people at the centre of all that we do. In doing so, we must always uphold the rights of these young people. Children and youth have the right to be heard, respected and considered when it comes to their own care. They have the right to feel connected to their family, culture and community. They also have the right to feel safe, to receive an education and the supports they need to reach their full potential. Let's take this week to remind ourselves of that.

For the past two years, Youth in Care Week events have been put on hold due to the pandemic and we have not had the same opportunities to connect in person as in previous years. This year, we are looking forward to getting out into our communities and participating in some of the events around the province for Child and Youth in Care Week. I know I speak for the whole RCY team when I say we have truly missed being able to make those face-to-face connections with young people and to learn more about their experiences and visions for care and connection.

It is vital for all of us to hear and value the voices of children and youth in care. Through our work at RCY, we do our best to uplift the voices of young people – from our direct advocacy work to youth engagement initiatives for the reports and projects that we do – by really listening to what they have to say about their experiences, challenges and, most importantly, their successes.

Please join me this week in raising our hands to honour these young people and helping to ensure that their lives are filled with the loving care, compassion, support and resources that combine to create the sense of belonging they deserve in their lives.

To learn more about Child and Youth in Care Week and celebrations planned for this year, check out this link: <https://www.bcchildandyouthincareweek.com>.

There are many ways to stay updated on supports for young people and to learn about our Office. Follow us on social media: Facebook (@rcybc and @rcybcyouth); Instagram (@rcybcyouth); and Twitter (@rcybc and @rcybcyouth). We can also be reached via text message at 1-778-404-7161, through chat on our website www.rcybc.ca, via phone at 1-800-476-3933, or by email at rcy@rcybc.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J Charlesworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth