



Statement

June 4, 2018

For Immediate Release

For the eighth consecutive year, British Columbia is marking Child and Youth in Care Week, a time when we honour the strength, resilience and talents of those young people who are living in the care of the provincial government.

This is the second and final time I will recognize this important week as B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth. As many already know, I am leaving this position as of Aug. 31, 2018 to return to my home and family in New Brunswick. From a personal perspective, I have been moved by the courage of B.C. children and youth in care who face so many challenges compared to their non-care contemporaries. And I have been impressed by the fortitude of these children and youth, who on a daily basis overcome adversity and trauma with admirable resilience.

During my tenure as Representative, I have been honoured to serve as a voice for the more than 6,500 B.C. children and youth in care through our Office's advocacy work, through our monitoring of the child welfare system and through our investigations and reports into individual cases and systemic trends. There is still much work to be done, however – in particular in the areas of reducing the dramatic over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in care, improving permanency planning and better supporting youth as they age out of care. I am confident that the staff at the Representative's Office will continue to dedicate themselves every day to improving the lives of children and youth in care and will support my successor as Representative to the fullest capacity.

The Representative's Office provides independent oversight of the child welfare system, which means we are often in the position of providing critical feedback to help improve that system. However, this week is also a time in which my Office can acknowledge all the excellent work done by so many dedicated professionals in the system every day on behalf of vulnerable children and youth in B.C.

To all children and youth in care, my message to mark this week is simple: You are valued and you have rights. We are here to help uphold, and to assist you in advocating for, those rights. If you have issues with the way you are being treated or believe your rights are being ignored, please do not hesitate to call my Office at 1-800-476-3933. We will do our utmost to help you or to steer you to somebody who can help.

Bernard Richard

B.C. Representative for Children and Youth

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