



# REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Annual Report 2020/21  
*and*  
Service Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24

# TRIBUTE TO KATHERINE McPARLAND

Youth Champion ~ Homelessness Advocate ~ Changemaker

On Dec. 4, 2020, the world lost a passionate young advocate for social justice.

Katherine McParland was a bright light who suffered much in her earlier life. She was open about her time in foster care and her experience of aging out into homelessness, and she never forgot the desperation of those days. With a single-minded resolve, and with characteristic tenacity, fierceness and grace, Katherine set about changing the world, starting in Kamloops where she founded A Way Home Kamloops and then growing her reach and influence both provincially and nationally. She was determined to do everything in her power to change the trajectory of youth homelessness, and to make life better for the youth who came after her. In her own words,

*"Our most horrific life experiences that cause the deepest wounds can sometimes become our life purpose."*

That was certainly the case for Katherine.

Countless people were touched by Katherine's warmth and inspired by her passion for social justice, her huge heart, her deep intellect and her unceasing desire to learn, grow and make a lasting difference in the world. She was a tireless advocate for youth who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness and she put young people and their voices at the centre of all she did. Her February 2020 report *From Marginalized to Magnified – Youth Homelessness Solutions From Those with Lived Expertise*, done in collaboration with this Office, was a shining example of this. She put youth in the driver's seat, and not only listened to what they had to say but insisted that government and decision-makers did the same. Young people were valued, respected and heard by her. She helped people see that homelessness is grounded in systems failures, not the failings of the young people experiencing it.

At RCY, we were fortunate enough to work closely with Katherine and to support her in pursuing her dream of ending youth homelessness. Her passing leaves a huge hole and a terrible pain in our hearts. She often closed her presentations with:

*"Together we must prevent and end youth homelessness in our communities and our province. There is no time to wait. I stand rooted in action. Please stand with me."*

In her memory, we most certainly will.

~ Katherine McParland ~  
May 8, 1988 – December 4, 2020



Sept. 29, 2021

The Honourable Raj Chouhan  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my pleasure to present the 2020/21 Annual Report and the 2021/22 to 2023/24 Service Plan for the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to the Legislative Assembly.

This document reports on the period April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 and covers activities underway and planned for the period April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2024. It has been prepared in accordance with part 5, sections 17 and 19 of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J Charlesworth', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jennifer Charlesworth  
Representative for Children and Youth  
Province of British Columbia

pc: Ms. Kate Ryan-Lloyd  
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Jinny Sims, MLA  
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

The Representative and staff, who do their work throughout the province, would like to acknowledge that we are living and working with gratitude and respect on the traditional territories of the First Nations peoples of British Columbia. We specifically acknowledge and express our gratitude to the keepers of the lands on the traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh peoples (Prince George) and the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations (Victoria) where our offices are located.

We also acknowledge our Métis and Inuit partners and friends living in these beautiful territories.

*About the cover art:*

*As we were envisioning the visual imagery we wanted to use for this report, the recoveries of the 215 children on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School came to light. We wanted to weave hands and hearts together both to recognize what has been lost for many children, families and communities and what must pull us forward to create change and fulfill our promise to young people: to hold them with love, in safety and in connection. Thus the imagery for the cover of our Annual Report and Service Plan came to life.*

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## Representative for Children and Youth



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth has been British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth since 2018.

Dr. Charlesworth has worked in the B.C. social and health care sectors since 1977. From 1980 through 1992, she served in front-line child welfare, social policy, program management and executive roles within government, and was engaged in formative work on deinstitutionalization, community inclusion for people with disabilities, women's and girls' health, mental health and youth services. She served as the Secretary to three Cabinet Committees, including Social Policy and Aboriginal Relations, and was appointed to lead Cabinet Operations, facilitating a smooth transition between governments in 1991.

Dr. Charlesworth also supported the implementation of the 1995 Gove Inquiry into Child Protection recommendations and was a member of the executive team during the formation of the Ministry for Children and Families.

She left government in 1997 to complete her PhD on the power of women's voice in the face of adversity, teach child and youth care at the University of Victoria and grow her consulting practice.

In 2006, Dr. Charlesworth transitioned into the non-profit sector and became the Executive Director of the Federation of Community Social Services of BC. During her tenure, the Federation grew in size, scope and influence, and worked with Indigenous organizations to co-create new ways to support First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families. Dr. Charlesworth also co-led a comprehensive review of child and youth residential care in collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

After leaving the Executive Director role at the Federation, Dr. Charlesworth became immersed in developing the leadership, innovation and cultural awareness of the community-based social care sector. She founded the Leadership 2020 program for the Federation, has served on numerous community boards and provincial advisory committees, and was a member of the Premier's Advisory Council on Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. In 2017, she became the Organizational Change lead at InWithForward – Canada's first social research and development collective that integrates person-centred social science research and design to generate meaningful social innovation. Since 2016, Dr. Charlesworth has also been working with Chief Wedlidi Speck and many other leaders to inspire culturally safer workplaces and services for Indigenous staff and people served.

Dr. Charlesworth lives in the traditional territories of the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. She has a PhD in Child and Youth Care from the University of Victoria and an MBA from Oxford Brookes University in Oxford, England. She is an award-winning teacher, author, activist and a parent of two vibrant young adults who remind her daily of the power and promise of young people.



# A MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The times in which we are living are anything but typical. For a number of reasons, this period has been, and continues to be, both challenging and pivotal and I believe it will be looked back upon as historic and paradigm-shifting. As follows, this is not the typical Representative's Message included in our *Annual Report and Service Plan*.

After the fiscal year of 2020/21, in which all facets of our lives were profoundly affected and challenged by a worldwide pandemic and catastrophic wildfires in multiple communities, we have emerged into a period of deeper realization in B.C. and beyond. It is a time of reckoning about the ways in which our society's colonialist foundation has harmed – and continues to harm – First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous peoples.

At the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY), we see the effects of that harm play out every day – in our advocacy cases; in our review of injuries and deaths experienced by Indigenous children and youth who are in care or receiving services; and in our monitoring and oversight of child-serving systems that continue to marginalize Indigenous children and families.

During the past year, in particular, the deep damage wrought by colonialism has emerged clearer than ever in the public eye. This emergence began with troubling reports about Indigenous-specific racism in B.C.'s health care system in summer 2020 and the subsequent independent review that resulted in the illuminating *In Plain Sight* report, released by former Representative Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond in December.

The devastating and continuing effects of colonialism were further magnified by the heart-wrenching discovery in May 2021 by the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc Nation of the remains of more than 200 children on the former Kamloops Indian Residential School site and the subsequent similar and ongoing discoveries by other B.C. and Canadian Indigenous communities.

Although significant public initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls should have left no doubt about the horrors inflicted by residential schools, the ongoing recoveries of missing children in 2021 and the resultant grief and suffering of so many Indigenous communities have raised the awareness of British Columbians and Canadians to another level altogether.

With that greater public awareness comes a sense that we are at a watershed point in our history, as a province and a country. While we cannot change the past, we most certainly need to fully acknowledge the harm done and the continuing negative effects on Indigenous peoples, and we must work to make reparations. At the RCY, that means redoubling our efforts to mitigate those harms and to push for systemic changes to improve the lives of Indigenous children and families.

Given this increased awareness – and the enduring reality that more than 68 per cent of children currently in government care in B.C. are Indigenous – I believe we have reached a 'no turning



back' point in this province. Tweaks to our child-serving systems and practices are not enough; fundamental changes must be made. And RCY has a role in both pushing for those changes and supporting them to occur.

One way in which significant change will come is through the resumption of jurisdiction by Indigenous Nations and communities over the well-being of their own children. While the federal *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, which took effect in 2020, paved the legal path for this, actual transformation on the ground is slow in materializing. Our Office is determined to help support the process and this is one of the key functions of RCY's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations (FNMIR) team.

For example, the FNMIR team is currently working on a project with Dr. Helaina Gaspard of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa with the intent to identify and analyze all federal and provincial funding directed to Indigenous child welfare in B.C. This project promises to identify gaps and inequities and contextualize future funding required for Indigenous Nations and communities to take on child welfare responsibilities. We are also ready to support Indigenous Nations and communities in their efforts to resume jurisdiction in any other way that we are requested and that our legislative mandate permits.

While RCY assists in facilitating the resumption of jurisdiction, we are also keenly aware that changes must be made in the short-term in order to help the thousands of Indigenous children and families dealing with the current child welfare system.

One of the ways RCY can do that is to ensure that our organization is as culturally aware and responsive as possible. It is important that RCY be seen and experienced as a safe, welcoming place – for the children and families we serve, for the communities and organizations with whom we interact, and for the staff who work in our organization. We have taken several steps during the past few years toward improving cultural safety, humility and anti-racism at RCY and this inward improvement is an important, ongoing journey.

A key early step in RCY's transformation was the hiring of Samantha Cocker in August 2020 as Deputy Representative, Advocacy and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations – one of the top three senior leadership roles in our organization. In the past year, we have also developed and filled a new

### RCY Priority Areas





Knowledge Keeper position at RCY to support all staff to gain the required understanding of historical and current impacts of colonization and provide guidance and advice to RCY Executive. In the current fiscal year, the RCY Knowledge Keeper will be developing Elders' and Matriarchs' Circles to provide ad hoc advice, support and guidance. Over the past three years, we have also engaged a cultural safety and anti-racism consultant and facilitator who provides ongoing advice and also offers specialized Indigenous cultural safety and humility training to RCY staff.

These developments and learnings are changing the way we work at RCY. For example, a major focus of our Reviews and Investigations team during 2020/21 was preparing for the release of *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging*, which told the story of a First Nations girl and her mother, neither of whom received the support they needed to overcome a lifetime of trauma inflicted by a colonialist system.

The project team for this report, which was released in June 2021, was led by Indigenous staff members and guided by an Indigenous Circle of Advisors. The research methodology was significantly influenced by Indigenous knowledge and worldviews in which it is understood that there are multiple stories, perspectives and truths that are relevant to any situation being considered. This investigation, which featured a more relational approach to the interview process, contributed to a more fulsome and holistic understanding of Skye, her family, the people connected to her, and the situations they faced, including the impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma on the lives of Skye and her mother.

A lack of connection, belonging and identity was a central theme in Skye's story. And, indeed, strengthening connection, belonging, identity and overall well-being for all children and youth who are in care or receiving services remains at the centre of our work at the RCY in 2021/22 and beyond. Related to that central theme are a number of other priority 'buckets' for RCY on which we continue to focus our work, including:

- education and promotion of child rights
- effective care plans and care planning for children and youth
- supports for youth to successfully transition out of care and into adulthood
- supports and services for children and youth with support needs
- mental health and substance use supports and services for children and youth
- early supports and interventions to keep families together, and
- residential supports for children and youth in care.

Despite the obvious challenges of COVID-19, our Office made progress on a number of those priority 'buckets' during the 2020/21 fiscal year. In order to do that most effectively, in some cases we had to adjust our ways of working.

For example, when the pandemic rendered face-to-face contact with community partners, families and young people impossible, we made heavy use of various online tools to convene a wide range of community partners and collaborate to produce the report *Left Out: Children and Youth with Special Needs in the Pandemic*. Released in December 2020, *Left Out* illustrated the inequities that make life difficult for children and youth with support needs and their families and called on government to immediately begin working with those affected to address their urgent needs, which have been particularly neglected in the pandemic.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

*Left Out* was one of six RCY-produced reports released during fiscal 2020/21 despite the limitations arising from both COVID-19 and a provincial election. Those reports, detailed in the pages of this *Annual Report and Service Plan*, addressed topics ranging from the experiences and rights of youth who have been involuntarily detained under the *Mental Health Act (Detained, January 2020)*, to an aggregate examination of youth who self-harm (*A Way to Cope, September 2020*), to illuminating the critical gaps in services and supports for youth transitioning from government care into adulthood (*A Parent's Duty, December 2020*).

Another change in our approach in 2020/21 was to increase collaboration by RCY with academic institutions in order to surface timely research related to the pandemic and connected with our Office's priorities. During the fiscal year, we released two companion reports produced by Simon Fraser University's Children's Health Policy Centre – one examining the effect of COVID-19 on children's mental health and the other offering effective approaches to reducing childhood anxiety during the pandemic. The practice of partnering with academic institutions on such work will continue in the coming years as RCY makes the most efficient use of our platform and resources.

One of the biggest learnings for our organization during the pandemic has been that we are able to function extremely well with nearly all of our staff working remotely. Despite limitations on community outreach and in-person contact due to COVID-19, RCY's core functions have continued, with our Advocates opening 1,371 cases in 2020/21 and our Reviews and Investigations staff handling a record 4,524 reports of injuries and deaths to children and youth.

Consequently, we have changed our policy to provide almost all of our staff the option of continuing to work remotely. This will enable us to have a presence in more B.C. communities and it will remove barriers to people – especially Indigenous candidates – for whom working for RCY might previously have meant a physical move that was not feasible. In addition, lessons learned during the pandemic about remote work contributed to our decision to permanently close our Burnaby office in February 2021, a decision that eliminated lengthy commute times for many of our Lower Mainland-based employees and that will enable our Advocates to establish drop-in hours at existing child- and youth-serving organizations in the Lower Mainland.

The document that follows outlines the approach to meeting my accountability to the public and the Legislature to report on the activities of the Office and plans for future years. It describes the activities of the Office during 2020/21 and outlines RCY's planned strategic initiatives for 2021/22 to 2023/24. It provides a full and comprehensive picture of the Office's accomplishments over the past reporting period, plans for future years and how RCY's work to achieve its mandate, vision and goals will be measured.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth  
Representative for Children and Youth



**Dealt directly with COVID-19:**

- two partnership reports with SFU Child Health Policy Centre on children's mental health
- *A Parent's Duty* report on extending supports to youth transitioning to adulthood
- distributing information on supports to youth via community partners
- social media #CovidandKidsBC campaign

**Extensive use of technology such as Zoom, Miro Boards and livestream report releases:**

- less travel, more efficiency, inclusivity, easier participation

**Together with online community partners produced collaborative report (*Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic*)**

**Working remotely**

- hiring staff throughout B.C.

**KEEPING OUR PRIORITIES IN FOCUS:**  
How we're working differently since COVID-19

**Closed Burnaby office:**

- repurposing funds for youth engagement
- meeting young people where they're at

**Collaborations with external researchers: lifting up each other's work**

**Different kinds of consultation:**

- supports for early years
- advisory circles on supports for youth with FASD
- Circle of Advisors for investigative report on First Nations youth
- engaged with youth who had been involuntarily detained about their experience (*Detained* report) and upcoming report on child participation in family law and child protection proceedings

**New ways of reporting:**

- FASD co-researcher and parents of children with FASD accompanied Representative to Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

The background is a solid teal color. It is decorated with several stylized, flat teal hands and feathers. The hands are positioned in the corners and along the sides, with fingers spread. The feathers are scattered throughout the background, some pointing upwards and others downwards. The text "WHO WE ARE" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

**WHO  
WE ARE**

# OFFICE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

## Representative's Mandate

The mandate of the Representative for Children and Youth is:

<b>Advocacy</b>	To provide information, advice and assistance to children, youth, young adults and their families who need help in dealing with designated or prescribed services or programs provided or funded by government; to help them to become effective self-advocates with respect to those services; to support and promote the development of advocacy services within communities; and to comment publicly on advocacy services for children and their families with respect to designated services.
<b>Reviews and Investigations</b>	To conduct reviews and undertake investigations of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth who have received reviewable services and to identify and make recommendations for improvements to services to prevent similar injuries or deaths in the future.
<b>Monitoring</b>	To monitor, review, audit and conduct research on the provision of government-funded designated services or programs for children and youth and their families and to identify and make recommendations for change to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of those services.

*Reviewable services* are services or programs under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and *Youth Justice Act* and include mental health and addictions services for children.

*Designated and prescribed services* include but are not limited to:

- Family support
- Child protection
- Foster care
- Adoption
- Guardianship
- Children and youth with support needs
- Early childhood development and child care services
- Mental health and addiction services for children
- Youth justice
- Services for youth and young adults during their transition to adulthood
- Community Living BC (CLBC) services for young adults between their 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> birthdays
- Services under the Agreement with Young Adults program and the provincial Tuition Waiver program for eligible young adults between their 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> birthdays



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

## Vision

A province in which all children, youth and young adults are healthy and safe, and their interests and viewpoints are heard and acted upon.

## Mission

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth is an independent advocacy and oversight body that champions the fundamental rights of and promotes improvements in services for children, youth and young adults.<sup>1</sup>

## Goals

1. RCY helps to improve services to children, youth and young adults who are in receipt of or eligible for designated or reviewable services.
2. RCY champions the rights of children, youth and young adults.
3. RCY identifies and promotes awareness of the legislation, policies and practices that result in the over-involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth and their families and communities, and promotes changes, services and supports that will address and reduce that over-involvement.
4. RCY identifies, understands and addresses issues of systemic racism and structural barriers that impact the lives of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families served.
5. RCY supports First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in reassuming jurisdiction over child and family services.
6. Children, youth and young adults are engaged in informing the work of RCY.
7. RCY is on a journey to become a culturally safer organization for staff and people served.
8. RCY works with integrity in an informed, effective and collaborative manner.
9. RCY develops and implements new ways of carrying out the work of the organization.

<sup>1</sup> RCY's jurisdiction is limited to those in receipt of or eligible for designated or reviewable services.



## Values



## Organization

In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, RCY put in place remote work arrangements for all staff. Given the effective outcomes and positive experiences of these arrangements, many staff are now working remotely on a permanent and voluntary basis. In February 2021, the Representative closed the Burnaby office location and continues to operate office locations in Victoria and Prince George. The closure of this location will allow staff to engage directly with youth in various existing hub locations in the Lower Mainland on an ongoing basis.

The Representative's staff bring a range of expertise, experience and educational backgrounds to the Office. Remote work has allowed for a shift in recruitment practices. To better reach qualified applicants – particularly Indigenous applicants – most positions, with some exceptions, can be filled by individuals living in all regions of the province. For those staff working in a location without an RCY office, arrangements have been made with a provincial government office location for administrative purposes. Through outreach activities, primarily undertaken at this time via virtual means, RCY advocacy and other staff continue to engage with children and youth and their families and connect with organizations and communities province-wide.

To ensure that the Office is responsive to, culturally safe for, and reflective of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth it supports, RCY employs intentional strategies to attract and retain First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous staff. As of March 31, 2021, 20 per cent of RCY permanent positions are held by First Nations, Métis, Inuit or Urban Indigenous employees.





*RCY employs internal strategies to ensure the Representative's Office is responsive, culturally safer and reflective of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth it supports. Strategies include:*

- intentional approaches to attract and retain First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous staff
- creation of dedicated positions:
  - Deputy Representative for Advocacy and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations; this position is one of the two most senior organizational leaders reporting directly to the Representative
  - a Knowledge Keeper to support all staff to develop the required understanding of the historical and current impacts of colonization and provide guidance and advice to RCY Executive and staff in all areas of the work of the Representative. The Knowledge Keeper will develop and be supported by a circle of Elders and a circle of Matriarchs
  - retention of an RCY cultural safety consultant
- establishment of a specific Indigenous-focused program area, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations team, that works with RCY's other program areas to ensure that Indigenous values and perspectives are reflected in all aspects of the organization's work
- ensuring the Office's policies, procedures and practices reflect an intention towards greater cultural safety, including:
  - engagement of a cultural safety consultant and anti-racism consultant and facilitator to advise RCY Executive on policies, procedures and practices
  - participation by all RCY employees in Indigenous cultural safety training, including specialized training delivered by RCY's cultural safety consultant
  - establishing an RCY employee cultural safety design team
  - creating an interactive site where staff can access and share cultural safety and anti-racism learning resources.



## Accountability

The Representative is an independent officer of the Legislature, accountable to the citizens of B.C. through their elected officials.

The Representative reports to the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth (SSCCY), an all-party committee of the Legislature. SSCCY is responsible for fostering greater awareness and understanding among legislators and the public about the B.C. child- and youth-serving system. Every one of the Representative's reports is reviewed by the Committee, thereby providing a public forum for discussion.

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (SSCFGS) is responsible for reviewing annual reports, rolling three-year service plans and budgets of all independent or statutory officers of the Legislature. Under this authority, SSCFGS considers and makes recommendations on the annual report, service plan and budget for the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth for each fiscal year.

The financial accounts of the Representative are audited each year as part of the B.C. government's annual audit of its Consolidated Revenue Fund.



Artwork by Ava, Without a Map report\*

\*The *Without a Map* report was created for RCY as part of the youth engagement conducted for the *Detained* report.



## Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates

The Representative is a member of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA), an association of government-appointed advocates, representatives and ombudspersons for children and youth from the 10 provinces and two of the three territories: Alberta, B.C., Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Québec, Saskatchewan and Yukon. The 12 members of CCCYA have mandates to advocate for, and support the rights of, children and youth.

The CCCYA members meet regularly and work together to identify areas of mutual concern and develop ways to address issues at a national level. During 2020/21, the CCCYA transitioned to virtual meetings and came together remotely three times on June 1, 2020, Sept. 23 and 24, 2020 and Jan. 20 and 21, 2021. During this period, the CCCYA issued statements recognizing National Child Day and the need to make children's rights a priority and supporting the introduction of a Senate bill creating a national commissioner for children and youth. The CCCYA is also attuned to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the mental health and well-being of children and youth and is closely monitoring the response of governments and services and supports to children and youth.

The B.C. Representative for Children and Youth continues to lead the information exchange initiative between member CCCYA offices. Virtual information-sharing sessions are held bi-monthly with offices presenting on and discussing issues of common interest. In 2020/21, topics included meaningful youth engagement; virtual approaches to engaging with youth; experience with Youth Advisors; and approaches to engaging with marginalized youth.

### Fast Fact

Of children who had been isolated or quarantined, 30 per cent exceeded the clinical threshold for post-traumatic stress symptoms.

*(COVID-19 and the Impact on Children's Mental Health, Representative for Children and Youth, November 2020)*



## Focus on Children and Youth

The Representative advocates for the rights of all children and youth in B.C.

However, a major focus of the Representative's work are those children, youth and young adults who are receiving reviewable or designated services from MCFD or other public bodies delivering child-, youth- and young adult-serving programs including:

- family, youth and children in care services delivered under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCS Act)*
- guardianship and adoption services
- early childhood development and child care programs
- services for children, youth and young adults with support needs (CYSN)
- child and youth mental health programs
- substance use services for children and youth
- youth justice services.

To understand the conditions and circumstances of those children, youth and young adults needing supports and services and to most effectively meet its mandate, the Representative's Office collects and analyzes a wide range of data. The data informs the work of the Office and is essential to identifying trends and issues and setting RCY's strategic priorities for the coming years.

### Children and Youth in B.C. BY THE NUMBERS

**5,259**

Number of children and youth in care as of March 31, 2021

**3,513**

Number of Indigenous children and youth in care as of March 31, 2021

**796**

Number of youth who aged out of government care and youth agreements in fiscal year 2020/21

**25,338**

Number of CYSN-eligible children as of March 31, 2021

**1 in 7**

Number of children and youth in B.C. who will experience a mental illness at some point

**18**

Number of illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2020 among youth under the age of 19 years

**13**

Annual average daily number of youth in B.C.'s two custody centres in 2020/21 fiscal year

**Sources:** MCFD, CMHA, BC Coroners Service



## Born to be Kind

### RCY's Deputy Representative Samantha Cocker's Journey to Help Children and Youth



*"You have to approach this work with the philosophy and understanding about how we view and value the seven generations. Know that the seeds you plant today and all through your career will be seeds for the generations to come, and while you might not see the change, they're growing. If you think you're going to see it all before your time is up, you're going to burn yourself out."*

– Elder Wally Rupert

These are the profound words of wisdom from a cherished Indigenous Elder, spoken "years and years ago," that underpin Samantha Cocker's approach to her work in service of children, youth and young adults. Of Cree and Scottish ancestry, Samantha is RCY's Deputy Representative, Advocacy and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations. She began her position with RCY in August 2020 and has been working in the field of child and family

services for over 35 years with more than 20 years dedicated to child welfare in B.C. Throughout, that teaching has stayed with her, holding her up during the tough times.

*"I have been gifted many teachings from Elders over the years and if not for their advice early in my career, I may have never come to work in child welfare. Through this teaching, I came to understand that I could be a child protection worker AND be an advocate for families. I could get them better services and advocate for more supports."*

*"As an Indigenous woman, my heart's always been with Indigenous families. I wanted to see the system be better."*

Soft-spoken and thoughtful, Samantha's quiet passion for serving young people emanates from a steely core and a powerful conviction that children must be at the centre of her life and work, for they are pointing the way to the future and hold incredible promise.

*"I want to make a difference for all kids, but if I can make a difference for one kiddo, then I've been successful,"* says Samantha.

Her own personal background propelled her into the work she does now. Samantha has had a keen eye for justice since childhood and describes herself as having been in the human service field all her life, right back to elementary school.

*"I felt like an underdog, and so I always looked out for the underdog in school and in life. I learned sign language and became buddies with kids with diverse disabilities who were still, in those days, segregated into basements."*

As a child, Samantha was incensed by that injustice.



*"I wanted to make sure that there was equality. It was crazy to me that they weren't in our classrooms. I got my desk moved downstairs to be in the basement in Grade 6 because I didn't want them to be the only ones down there."*

That strength of spirit may have ancestral roots. Samantha names her grandmother and her great-grandmother as matriarchs who were influential mentors in her life.

*"When I was nine-years-old, I went to live with my great-grandmother and it was the best gift I ever could have been given. She was a small but mighty Cree woman and I got to live with her and learn from her. My grandmother was [also] a strong independent woman. She never had a driver's licence. She always had a job. She raised five children on her own and always paid her own way. She never ever thought, despite barriers, that she couldn't do whatever she wanted to do."*

For Samantha, the lessons from these powerful women stuck.

Although she didn't grow up in care, Samantha had experiences as a child that were similar to those of many children in the system. Like so many children today, she knows what it is to be disconnected from her culture and how damaging that can be. She was in her 20s before she learned of her Indigenous ancestry, although she had always suspected and been drawn to Indigenous cultures. Ultimately, she saw RCY as a place where it might be possible to create greater change.

*"I saw RCY as an organization that could push for change in a system in which I felt like I was bumping up against a cement ceiling all the time ... a place to push the edges of the system – through lots of systemic advocacy – for things to be different."*

As Deputy, the scope of Samantha's role is broad, deep and flexible. *"I see my role as supporting all of RCY's projects, ensuring Indigenous perspectives, supporting and building the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations team, and being in service of Indigenous people in B.C., especially in their efforts towards [resuming] jurisdiction [over child welfare]. The way that we talk about, work with and support Indigenous people and ensure that we're upholding their rights is what I see as being critical to this work."*

Especially now. We have arrived at a pivotal moment in Indigenous child welfare. And to Samantha, as daunting as the challenges may seem – a system that needs to be decolonized, young people disconnected from their cultures, a toxic drug supply, and mental health needs that are still going unmet – she also sees tremendous hope on the horizon. So daunting, yes, but also a moment of unprecedented possibility.

*"The resumption of Indigenous jurisdiction over child welfare is a huge sign of hope, and so are all the conversations that are taking place around anti-racist practice and culture. This plays out for all kids, not just Indigenous kids. And that's hopeful."*

For Indigenous young people who are experiencing a lack of connection to their communities she advises: *"Find one person you can have a conversation with. If you know no one, go into a Friendship Centre and be honest. They're going to help you. You will find belonging. Learn whatever you can learn."*





These days, inspiration comes daily from her grandchildren. *"Their fearlessness and the way they unapologetically describe who they are – I absolutely love it."*

They're also pointing the way to success. For Samantha, strengthening and empowering First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families is what it's all about. In that respect, for her, children and youth truly are leading the way.



The background is a solid purple color. It is decorated with several stylized, lighter purple hands and feathers. The hands are positioned around the edges and corners, with fingers spread. The feathers are scattered throughout the background, some pointing upwards and others downwards. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

# **PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES**



# PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES 2020/21

The three core mandated program areas under the *RCY Act* – Advocacy, Reviews and Investigations, and Monitoring and Strategic Initiatives – work closely together to achieve the Representative's mandate in advocating for children and youth and providing oversight to the child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems in the province.

The mandated program areas are supported by First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations and Communications with all teams collaborating and coordinating activities to deliver effective, highly integrated programs, and to promote youth engagement and build community and stakeholder awareness of the Office and its services. To fulfill its mandate, RCY builds partnerships with community and child-, youth- and young adult-serving organizations and collaborates with social research agencies involved in research related to the well-being of children and youth.

Corporate Services supports the entire Office through the provision of human resources, technology, financial and administrative services.



## RCY Collaboration with Others

Collaboration with others across the child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems is essential to the Representative's work to learn from those with lived expertise and experience as service receivers or providers, share information and partner on matters of shared concern.

RCY has positive working relationships with a wide range of community and service agencies and organizations including those that support children and youth with support needs; families with children in their early years; and those that provide services to youth connected to child welfare. This includes a recent initiative to engage researchers, service providers and First Nations and Métis leaders in examining the complexities of the early years system and in identifying aspirations for a system that would improve supports for families, assisted, in part, by identifying bright spots across the province.

The Office also collaborates with a number of post-secondary and research institutions, including Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, UBC Okanagan, the University of Northern B.C. and the University of Victoria, on a range of research topics. Over the past year, topics have included child and youth mental health in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic; experiences of gender-diverse youth; early years development; and children and youth experiencing complex challenges.

## RCY Cross-Program Collaboration

Cross-program collaboration is essential to ensuring effective and integrated delivery of services to children, youth and young adults. During the 2020/21 fiscal year, RCY has been working to further enhance cross-program collaboration.

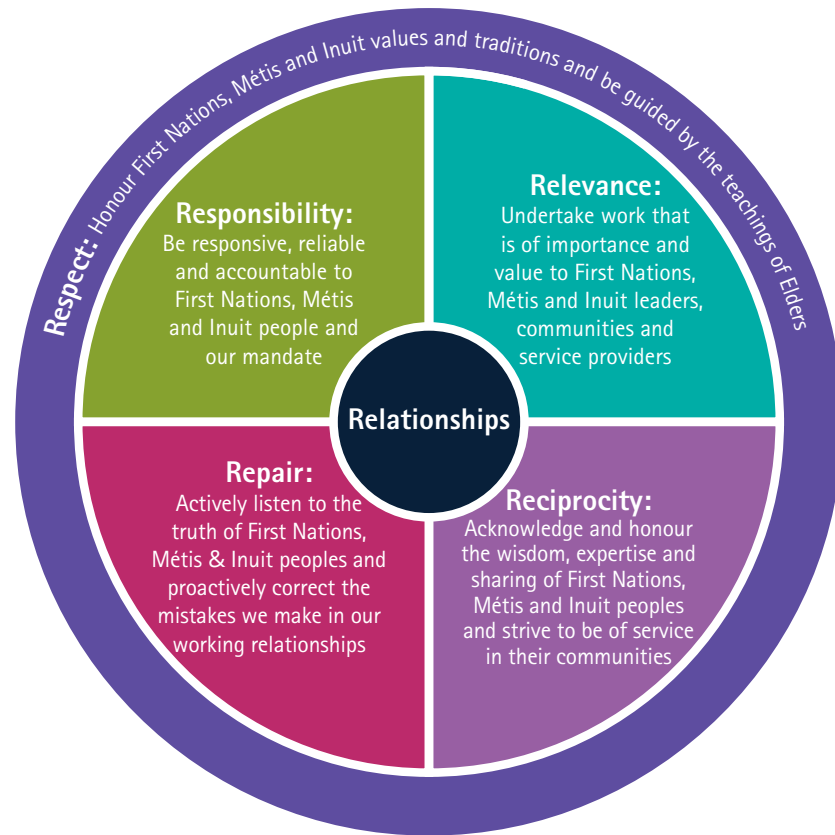
RCY's Systemic Issues Working Group (SIWG) is a cross-program committee led by Monitoring and Strategic Initiatives and comprised of staff from the core program areas as well as First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations and Communications. SIWG is responsible for identifying and prioritizing systemic issues in the child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems and developing strategies and action plans for addressing these issues. SIWG has been active over the past year addressing issues related to services and supports for youth transitioning out of government care; experiences of gender-diverse children and youth; and youth in need of supports.

Another important area of collaboration across RCY programs is the internal advocacy referral process introduced in 2020/21, where the Reviews and Investigations team makes referrals to the Advocacy team of cases involving reviewed injuries where there is an indication that the child or youth may be in need of advocacy support. Upon receiving the referral, a member of the Advocacy team will review the case and may follow up with the social worker to seek additional information and discuss further action. This new referral process provides an essential connection between program areas, ensuring that cases where a child or youth might need support and advocacy are addressed.



## The Six Rs of Research: RCY's approach

The Four Rs of research were developed in 1991 by Kirkness and Barnhardt as a way to be more inclusive of Indigenous knowledge and are now reflected in Indigenous research methodologies.\* RCY modified the Four Rs by adding two more, Relationships and Repair, to be more reflective of the approach the organization takes in research.



\*Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, *Journal of American Indian Education*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (May 1991), pp. 1-15. The four Rs were originally conceptualized for higher learning institutions, making these institutions more relevant for Indigenous learners, emphasizing the need for a higher educational system that respects them for who they are, that is relevant to their view of the world, that offers reciprocity in their relationships with others and that helps them exercise responsibility over their own lives.



# Advocacy

## Overview

Systems of child-, youth- and young adult-serving services in the province are complex and it can be challenging for those in need to identify, access and obtain services.

The Representative's Advocacy team provides information, advice and assistance directly to:

- children, youth, young adults and their families in relation to government-funded designated services
- young adults from their 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> birthdays who are eligible to receive services from Community Living BC (CLBC) and who received a reviewable service within 15 months of their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, and
- young adults up to their 24<sup>th</sup> birthdays who:
  - are on, or are eligible for, the Agreements with Young Adults program (AYA)
  - are on, or are eligible for, a provincial post-secondary tuition waiver.

Under its advocacy mandate, the Representative's Office also reaches out to communities to build awareness about child rights and to support and promote the development of local advocacy services. The Representative may identify broad issues that need to be addressed and may comment publicly on advocacy services and issues for children, youth, young adults and their families with respect to designated services.

## *Advocacy Support to Children, Youth, Young Adults and their Families*

RCY advocacy staff help children, youth, young adults and their families by:

- supporting them to make connections to services and programs they need
- discussing their rights and what to do if those rights are ignored
- facilitating discussions about the care and services they need, or are receiving, and the decisions made about them
- supporting them to speak up in a way that might solve their problem and helping them to become effective self-advocates with respect to the services they need
- assisting transitions out of MCFD care
- assisting transitions for young adults eligible for CLBC services.

When contacted by individuals about issues outside the Representative's mandate, the Advocacy team will provide a referral to an appropriate agency or service.

Many of those contacting the Representative's Advocacy team are assisted at the initial intake stage through the provision of information, advice and referrals to services and programs. This support might include coaching or advising an individual on how to approach a service provider, on how to resolve an issue, or on how to access or use a complaints process. Should a caller's situation require further support, an Intake Advocate will assign the file for additional follow-up and open a case file.



# ADVOCACY INTAKE FOR YOUTH

The Representative for Children and Youth makes sure the voices of B.C.'s young people are heard. We know that situations can be complicated and sometimes it's scary to ask for help. That's one of the reasons we're easy to contact.

What happens when you call our Advocacy line at 1-800-476-3933, text at 1-778-404-7161, chat from our website at [rcybc.ca](http://rcybc.ca) or email [rcy@rcybc.ca](mailto:rcy@rcybc.ca)?



**1** You'll be put through to an RCY staff member. What you say will be kept private.

**2** That person will determine how we can help you.

Maybe you don't know how to make connections to services you need.

Maybe you want to discuss your rights and what to do if those rights are ignored.

Maybe you need information about the right organization to talk to or suggestions on how to explain what you want.

**3** Sometimes you might need more help from us to resolve the issue. If that's the case, you'll be provided an Advocate to help you. An Advocate is a person who will listen to you and help you amplify your voice. They will promote your rights and best interests.

An Advocate can help you get the care and services you need. You might want help reconnecting with your family, community or culture or putting together an action plan. Maybe you feel like your social worker isn't listening to you or including you in planning. An Advocate can support you to speak up in a way that might resolve the issue.

*When you call the Advocacy line you can expect to be heard and respected. And you can expect support and assistance.*

Depending on the circumstances, an Advocate can help to ensure your needs are planned for as you transition out of MCFD care or connect to Community Living BC services. An Advocate can also provide you with information and support regarding the Agreements with Young Adults program and tuition waiver program.



## BRIGHT SPOT

### Family Support Institute of BC – Resource Parents

This past year has been difficult for everyone, as people needed to adjust to challenges in the midst of a global pandemic, which changed our way of living and being together. For some families with children, youth and young adults with disabilities, this year was extraordinarily challenging. In the report *Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic*, the Representative pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of B.C.'s support systems for children and youth, exacerbating long-standing problems and layering on new ones.

One bright spot for families struggling with the lack of health, social and educational supports for their children is found in the Family Support Institute (FSI), a provincial non-profit charitable society committed to supporting families who have a member with a disability. FSI is unique in Canada, being the only grassroots, parent-to-parent support organization with a broad volunteer base. Supports and services provided by FSI are free to any family.

FSI has over 200 trained volunteers who support families across the province by sharing experiences, connecting families, facilitating training and guiding people to supports, services and community resources in their regions. Resource Parents can provide family support for anyone, at any age, with any disability. They foster important connections to other families, support those who may feel lost navigating complicated government systems and those isolated due to their geographic location or family circumstances and offer encouragement and guidance. Resource Parents are available for one-to-one support, to attend meetings with a parent or family member in need, facilitate workshops and provide referrals to relevant services and supports in the community. In the spring of 2021, RCY participated in training for volunteers with the FSI.

At the same time, FSI parent volunteers were adjusting to their own pandemic realities. RCY staff are inspired by the dedication, motivation, compassion and experience that these volunteers – parents with their own unique circumstances – provide to other parents so selflessly.

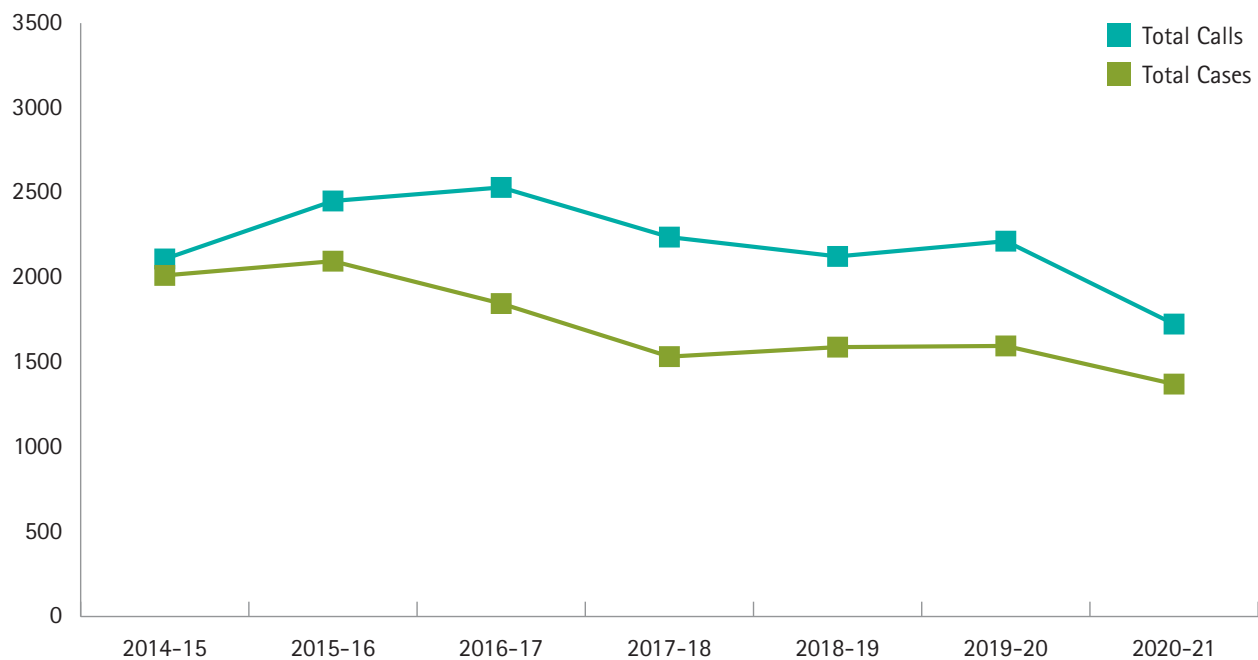


## Highlights of Advocacy Activities in 2020/21

### Advocacy Trends

Figure 1 below shows the total number of advocacy calls received as compared to the total number of advocacy cases taken on by the Representative's Advocacy team for the years 2014/15 to 2020/21.

Figure 1 – Total Advocacy Calls and Total Advocacy Cases by Fiscal Year – 2014/15 to 2020/21



## Figure 2 – Total Advocacy Cases by Fiscal Year – 2007/08 to 2020/21

Figure 2 below highlights the total number of advocacy cases handled by the Representative's Advocacy team between 2007/08, the year the Office commenced its advocacy function, and the 2020/21 fiscal year.

In total, between 2007/08 and 2020/21, the Representative's Office has handled 23,790 advocacy cases.

Fiscal Year	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	Total
Total Cases	1,190	1,555	1,652	1,714	1,919	1,805	1,912	2,012	2,096	1,846	1,533	1,589	1,596	1,371	23,790

### *Advocacy case example*

#### **Supporting Youth to Have Their Needs Met**

Jason, an Indigenous youth, called RCY with the support of a school counsellor, seeking advocacy services to address his problematic and unhealthy living situation. A Delegated Aboriginal Agency (DAA) had supported Jason in an arrangement to live with an extended family member, but the family member was no longer able to care for Jason and he had returned home to a precarious living situation. An RCY Advocate supported Jason to share with the DAA staff how his current living situation was impacting his mental health and his ability to complete his schooling.

Despite several meetings, including with Jason's parents, no solution was identified to Jason's concerns. During this period, Jason had begun living with friends because he felt unsafe in his parents' home. After further meetings with the DAA staff, Jason's family and his school supports, his parents agreed to sign a Voluntary Care Agreement allowing Jason to be placed outside his home in an approved placement. Jason's ability and readiness to live independently were then assessed over the next several months to determine whether he qualified for a Youth Agreement. Jason was approved and placed on a Youth Agreement. He lives independently but continues to have a DAA social worker involved to provide guidance and support in developing his skills for independence.

After Jason began living independently on his Youth Agreement, he again contacted RCY with a request for further advocacy support. Because local libraries and other places to access free Internet were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Jason needed funding to pay for Internet service in order to complete his schoolwork online. The Advocate spoke with the DAA staff and presented this as both a basic need to access services during the pandemic and the only way for Jason to access his right to education. The DAA agreed to cover the cost of Internet service allowing Jason to complete the schoolwork necessary for him to stay on track to graduate.





Figures 3 and 4 below provide further detail on advocacy cases by illustrating the origin of advocacy cases by source of initial caller and by contact and region.

Figure 3 – Advocacy Cases by Initial Contact 2020/21

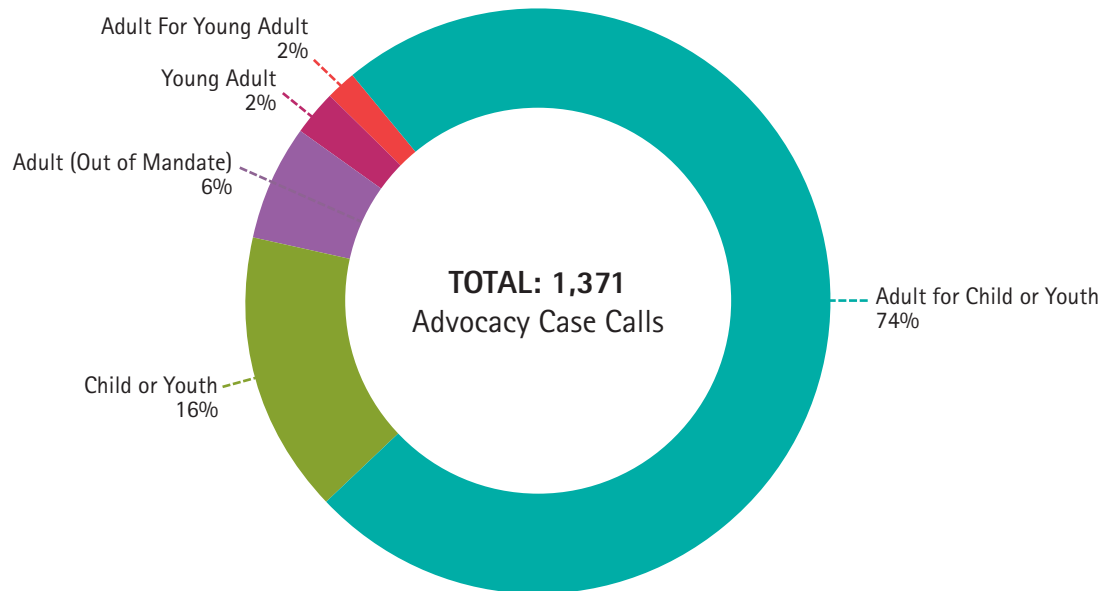
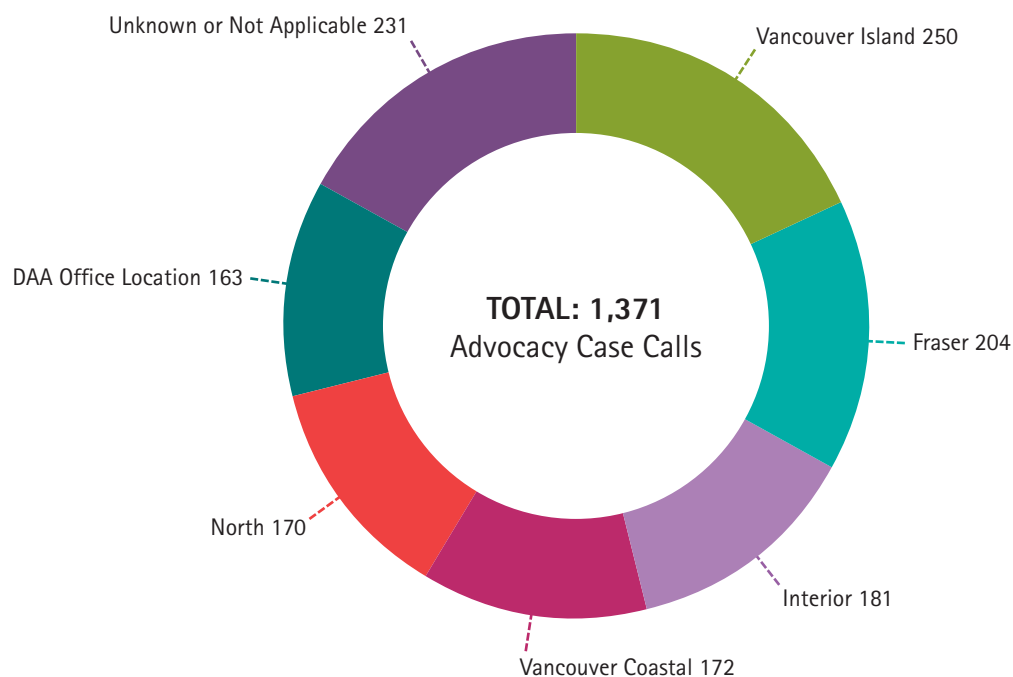


Figure 4 – Advocacy Cases by Region – 2020/21



### The top three areas of concern for all individuals seeking advocacy advice were:

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| • Ineffective or inadequate planning or supports                         | 25 per cent |
| • Disagreement with planning   | 18 per cent |
| • Operational Practice – Quality of practice/care provided is inadequate | 17 per cent |

## Advocacy Initiatives

### Providing Advocacy Support During COVID-19 Pandemic

Throughout 2020-21, the pandemic challenged our ability to deliver advocacy services due to the need to reduce face-to-face meetings. However, the Advocacy team continued to provide support to children, youth, young adults and their families through increased use of virtual tools. During this period, RCY also used its database system to identify and track cases impacted by COVID-19.

### Chat and Text Functions

In August 2020, RCY launched a chat function through its website as another way for children, youth and young adults to connect with Advocates in addition to email and phone. Most conversations can be done completely over chat, though Advocates may ask to speak with youth over the phone depending on the complexity of the concerns. As a follow-up to the chat function, RCY Advocacy services later launched a texting function. As of January 2021, children and youth can connect directly with Intake Advocates by texting 778-404-7161.

RCY has received positive feedback from youth who have used the chat or text functions. Initial response indicates that youth find these methods more convenient to connect with the Office.

Information regarding accessing the RCY chat and text functions is available on the RCY website, social media platforms, RCY communication materials and through virtual and in-person presentations. Services provided over chat and text remain confidential.

### Fast Fact

Calls from B.C. children to the **Kids Help Phone**, which offers 24/7 counselling, rose by 70 per cent during the first months of the pandemic.

*(Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)*



*If you are a youth...*

**You can now text our Advocates at  
1-778-404-7161 or message them online  
from our website at RCYBC.ca**

**Mon. - Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**



## BRIGHT SPOT

### The Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks

The Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN or "the Fed") is a youth-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of young people between the ages of 14 and 24 in and from care in B.C.

The Fed was created in 1993 by a group of young people in care who saw the need for more social support for their peers. The Fed is known for creating safe spaces for youth to come together, build connections, identify challenges and gain a sense of community and family. Its goal is to ensure that all young people it serves are connected with opportunities to express their unique voices and reach their full potential.

This past year, RCY staff were amazed by the ability of the Fed, operating with a staff of six and seasonal youth interns, to shift during the pandemic from holding in-person youth retreats, workshops and learning sessions, to providing support online for those struggling with isolation and seeking resources for additional supports. The Fed began the "Fed Connects" online program during the pandemic to support youth in and from care to come together and learn new skills. "Fed Connects" offered online drop-in hangouts Monday through Friday from the end of March until June of 2020, as well as workshops and live events in the Fed Connects Facebook group a couple of days each week. The Fed still offers "Fed Connects" activities weekly, including drop-in hangouts called "Fed Family Chats," as well as workshops and other events.

The Fed also supports local Youth in Care Networks in communities across B.C. "Locals" are hosted by partner agencies and provide opportunities for young people to connect with other youth in and from care in their communities. Over the past year, the "Locals" shifted from in-person activities to online and distanced events including virtual workshops and hangouts, distanced outdoor games and dropping off holiday dinners to young people.

The Fed also offers financial support for those in and from government care including educational bursaries of up to \$1,500 to support youth to pursue their educational goals and to achieve other goals including paying for driving lessons, obtaining identification documents, paying for dental work and/or gym or recreational fees. This past holiday season, the Fed provided over 300 Holiday Care Kits to children and youth in and from care around B.C. thanks to the generous support of the Fed family, which included MCFD staff, adult allies and businesses. Care Kits contained items such as journals, colored pencils, cultural items, personal care items, treats, warm clothing items like socks and gloves and a special holiday card designed by a youth artist.

In 2011, the Fed, in partnership with MCFD, initiated the annual BC Child and Youth in Care Week intended to raise social awareness and shift negative perceptions about youth in and from care, and to celebrate and recognize children and youth in care as individuals with talents, contributions and dreams.



### Case Information Tracking and Reporting (CITAR) System Development

RCY's CITAR database, established in 2007, collects Advocacy and Reviews and Investigations program data and supports Advocacy case management. As reported in last year's annual report, the database needed significant revision to accommodate the expansion of the Representative's mandate and support strategies developed by the Office to better capture and categorize data. Re-development work began in the fall of 2019 and continued throughout the 2020/21 fiscal year with full implementation on April 1, 2021.

The most significant change to the system is the ability to relate advocacy issues to individuals rather than a case file, thus improving RCY's ability to understand data collected and how individuals who connect with the Office may be experiencing designated services. The system and supporting tools will also increase administrative efficiency, improve information management within each case managed and enhance quality assurance and audit functions.

#### *Advocacy case example*

#### **Supporting Young Adult Transition Planning**

Shelly came to the attention of RCY when her caregiver shared that her transition plan had completely changed. Rather than remaining with her current caregiver, she was unexpectedly moved to another home. This occurred several months prior to her 19th birthday, which also meant that she was facing another move when she transitioned to services with CLBC. There was also concern that Shelly's perspective had not been gathered regarding the change in her plan and that multiple moves would negatively impact Shelly's mental and emotional wellness.

An RCY Advocate gathered information from the MCFD team about why the move occurred as well as information from MCFD and others about how Shelly was settling in at her new home. The Advocate attended several case management meetings to see how MCFD was supporting Shelly's continuity of care in relation to contact with her former caregiver and community programming. They also discussed whether an additional move could be prevented. Most importantly, Shelly's Advocate requested that Shelly's thoughts, feelings and preferences regarding CLBC housing options and day programming be gathered in order to inform planning moving forward.

Shelly settled in nicely to her new home and the team confirmed that Shelly's perspective would be gathered when exploring CLBC services. They also held discussions about how best to engage Shelly in this process.

### Data Management

Building on the CITAR database re-development, RCY took an important step in its overall data management with the hiring of a data manager for its Advocacy program. In the coming months, the Advocacy data manager will be working on Advocacy data reporting to support the Office in enhancing its use of qualitative information gathered through individual advocacy cases to help identify trends in issues that are occurring across the province. The Advocacy program also plans on enhancing its quality assurance processes over the next fiscal year. This position is also integral to supporting the work of the Systemic Issues Working Group at RCY.



## Behind the Scenes with RCY Staff – Advocacy

### Karla

For Karla, giving back to her community has always been a high priority, whether it's as a foster parent or working with marginalized populations. *"Surrey simply has my heart,"* she says of her hometown.

Karla – who comes from Métis and Polish heritage – joined RCY as an Advocate in 2019 from a non-profit organization working in alternative education for kids involved with MCFD. She had also worked as a social worker on an Indigenous youth team in Surrey.



*"I came to RCY to effect as much change as possible in the child- and youth-serving system through identifying systemic issues and working directly with young people who need our help,"* says Karla. *"What keeps me motivated are the small wins in the everyday stuff we do as Advocates – and especially in connecting in one-to-one conversations with youth."*

Karla believes RCY Advocates are uniquely suited to identify systemic issues as they come up over and over again in their work. In her two years with RCY, she has been excited to witness Advocacy becoming more involved in the organization's goal-setting and in contributing to reports and has developed an interest in the investigations side of RCY's work.

*"What gets me excited is hearing from other people in our organization with the same values who want to see change,"* she says. *"It's really motivating to be surrounded by a like-minded team with the same concerns, and we can tackle solutions together."*

Karla continues, *"In all relationships in life – both personal and professional – collaboration and respect go a long way. I stay at RCY because I admire the organization's approach, using relationships and collaboration with each other and with those in other organizations to get our work done. I really believe that with the right people on the team, we can effect true change in this way."*

Karla and her husband have *"two kids from my belly and one from my heart,"* she says, referring to their 10- and 13-year-olds and their 21-year-old foster son. They are an active family who do things together, with travel and camping high on the list. COVID-19 threw in some challenges over the last year-and-a-half, but they are looking at setting some new travel goals as soon as the pandemic allows.



## Advocacy Outreach

### Custody Centres

Providing direct advocacy support and advice to youth in B.C.'s two youth custody centres, continues to be an important part of the Representative's advocacy. This work is facilitated by the ongoing positive relationships the team has established with staff at the Prince George and Burnaby Youth Custody Centres. Participation via videoconference in the monthly custody centres' Director's Meetings and seasonal events has helped to build and maintain these relationships.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the youth custody centres restricted RCY Advocates from physically being on-site. They did, however, make arrangements for youth to continue to have access to Advocates through phone and video conference. In practice, attempting outreach with youth in custody centres through telephone and videoconference has had its limitations. Previously, Advocates were able to meet with youth in-person, talk informally and build relationships that laid the foundation for them to feel comfortable in sharing information and engaging in a more formal conversation about their issues and concerns. Establishing such relationships via videoconference has proven more difficult.

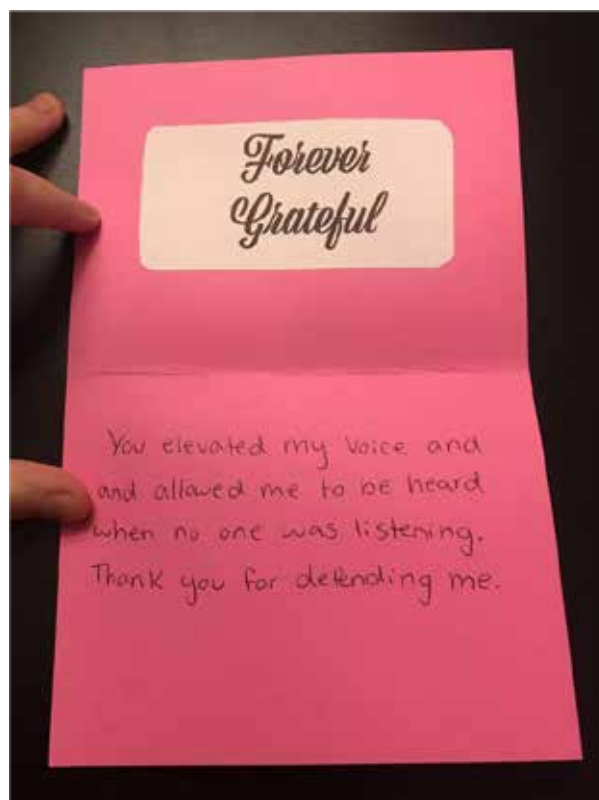
During this past year, Advocates were involved in supporting youth at the custody centres to help them engage in group advocacy and appeal decisions made by the centres that restricted their access to recreational activities deemed to be high-risk. Although neither appeal resulted in these activities being restored, these youths were able to exercise their right to be heard, and the centres collaborated with them in selecting and implementing replacement activities.

### Fast Fact

A Youth Agreement is a legal agreement made between MCFD or a DAA and a young person between the ages of 16 and 18 in cases involving a "significant adverse condition, such as severe substance use, a significant behavioural or mental disorder, or sexual exploitation".

As of Oct. 31, 2020, there were 643 youth on Youth Agreements, 271 (42 per cent) of whom were Indigenous.

(*A Parent's Duty*, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)



Greeting card filled out by a youth for Without a Map report





*Advocacy case example***Supporting Youth to Have Their Voices Heard**

Marsha had been living outside of her family home for a number of months but had not been receiving any financial support from her parents or MCFD. She had been previously assessed for a Youth Agreement by MCFD but was declined. Marsha and others who were aware of her situation believed that it would not be in Marsha's best interest for her to return to the family home. Marsha called RCY for support because MCFD was not returning her calls and she felt the ministry was not including her in planning. An RCY Advocate provided Marsha with information about Youth Agreements and her rights, asked the MCFD social worker to again reach out to Marsha directly to clarify her needs, and further supported Marsha during a joint phone call with her social worker to share her voice.

When support from both Marsha's biological family and MCFD continued to lag, the RCY Advocate gathered further collateral information from those who knew Marsha's situation and then convened a larger meeting that brought forward new perspectives to MCFD. The RCY Advocate also encouraged Marsha to make a list of all her financial and support needs and personal independence goals. As a result of the youth speaking up and RCY Advocacy elevating her concerns, MCFD entered into a Youth Agreement with Marsha, ensuring continued safety and stability in her life by enabling her to remain where she had been staying, giving her ongoing support from an MCFD social worker and youth worker, and allowing her to pursue her school and employment goals.

*General Outreach*

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Advocacy outreach activities in the 2020/21 fiscal year. In-person activities that made up most of the Advocacy team's outreach efforts, such as delivering rights education workshops and information sessions as well as participating and presenting at conferences, were cancelled, thus RCY shifted to liaising with community organizations and connecting with First Nations and Indigenous communities through virtual and other means.

Within a few months, the Advocacy team's outreach work transitioned to providing online clinics to youth custody centres, monthly online workshops with the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks and virtual methods to promote the expansion of the RCY mandate, which now includes the ability to advocate on behalf of young adults up to their 24<sup>th</sup> birthdays who have aged out of care and who are on or eligible for an Agreement with Young

**Fast Fact**

The AYA program began almost 25 years ago. In its most recent form, it provides up to \$15,000 a year for a total of four years for eligible youth from 19- to 26-years-old, as long as they are attending school, taking a life skills program or attending a rehabilitation program. However, as of March 2020, fewer than 10 per cent of the total number of eligible young adults in B.C. were receiving AYA.

*(A Parent's Duty, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)*



Adults (AYA), or who are on or eligible for a provincial post-secondary tuition waiver. The Advocacy team also developed and recorded a webinar on self-advocacy for the Foundry and provided virtual training and information sessions to the Indigenous Perspectives Society. Looking ahead, in designing its re-engagement plan, RCY Advocacy is focused on building on successful past practices as well as incorporating lessons learned during the pandemic.

### *Advocacy case example*

#### **Supporting Young Adults under the Agreements with Young Adults program**

RCY was contacted by 19-year-old Breanne, who had concerns that her AYA would be cancelled by MCFD due to changes in her circumstances. Breanne called RCY for advocacy and enhanced support regarding maintaining AYA funding.

Breanne was in care under a Continuing Custody Order, and when she turned 19, was approved for AYA funding to support her career goal of working in the trades. This funding allowed Breanne to enroll in a trades program in her local community college and supported her in covering her rent and living expenses. While attending the program, Breanne experienced some personal losses which significantly affected her mental health to the point that she felt she could not continue with her studies. Breanne was worried that she would be cut from AYA funding if she left her training program and expressed fear and hesitancy about talking with her MCFD AYA social worker about her mental health and well-being.

An RCY Advocate provided Breanne with information on the AYA program and the options available, including that the program is also designed to support young adults who may need to attend rehabilitation, mental health or life-skills programs. The RCY Advocate arranged a meeting with Breanne and her AYA social worker to discuss Breanne's concerns and what MCFD would require for Breanne to remain on an AYA. The outcome of the meeting was positive with Breanne being advised that she could remain on the program under a rehabilitative plan. Under this option, Breanne needed to find community resources to help with her mental health needs and develop a plan that would meet MCFD's requirement to have 15 hours of programming per week. Breanne's social worker was very supportive, including maintaining her AYA funding and providing her with bus passes to ensure she had transportation while Breanne created her own unique rehabilitative program to meet her individual needs.

Breanne's plan, which was approved by her MCFD social worker, included weekly group programs, individual counselling, health and fitness goals, and a life-skills program. Following three months under this program, Breanne's needs would be reviewed and next steps to get her back to pursuing her educational goals would be considered.





# Reviews and Investigations

## Overview

Public bodies that provide “reviewable services” are required to report critical injuries and deaths of children and youth to the Representative if the child or family was receiving services at the time of, or in the year prior, to the injury or death.<sup>2</sup>

Reviewable services include:

- child welfare
- children and youth with support needs
- addiction services for children
- mental health services for children
- youth justice services.

All critical injury and death reports received from public bodies are entered into the RCY database. Reports are reviewed to identify whether they meet Reviews and Investigations' mandate and whether service delivery issues may have been a factor in the death or critical injury.

When there appears to be strong connection between the services received or not received and the injury or death, RCY conducts a more in-depth review of the injury or death. This comprehensive review is used to inform a decision about whether to investigate the injury or death.

One or two critical injuries or deaths per year will result in a full investigation by the RCY. These are selected when the child or youth's story, that will be the focus of the investigation, reflects the experience of many other children and youth in B.C. When the team conducts a full investigation, the Representative prepares a public report with recommendations to government focused on preventing similar injuries or deaths in the future.

When a comprehensive review does not result in a decision to conduct a full investigation, the Representative may share the results of her review with the public bodies responsible for the service provision. Sharing the results of a comprehensive review in a meaningful way can make a significant contribution to the ministry's process of ongoing quality assurance and help inform improvements to practice.



### Fast Fact

There were 71 injuries reported to the Representative in 2020/21 in which the child or youth was in a precarious living situation, including shelters, safehouses, hotels, motels or couch-surfing with friends.

(Reviews and Investigations statistics)

<sup>2</sup> Critical injury means an injury to a child that may result in the child's death or cause serious or long-term impairment of the child's health.



## A Detailed Look at RCY's Comprehensive Reviews

RCY conducted 10 comprehensive reviews in 2020/21.

Comprehensive reviews have two purposes:

1. to determine whether to investigate
2. to learn from specific circumstances to inform improvements to reviewable services.

If a review does not result in a full public investigation, RCY may send a detailed letter disclosing the results of the comprehensive review to the public body that provided the services, usually MCFD or a health authority. This letter provides details on the life of the child, how their injury occurred, areas of service strength and suggestions for service improvement or learning.

### *Example:*

One comprehensive review was completed for Mauve, a youth who resided with her family and who died by suicide at age 15. Mauve was an intelligent, thoughtful and caring youth who had a talent for music and played several instruments. Mauve began struggling with anxiety and depression at a young age. She was supported by her family and engaged in a variety of services over many years.

This comprehensive review found several themes for service improvement, including:

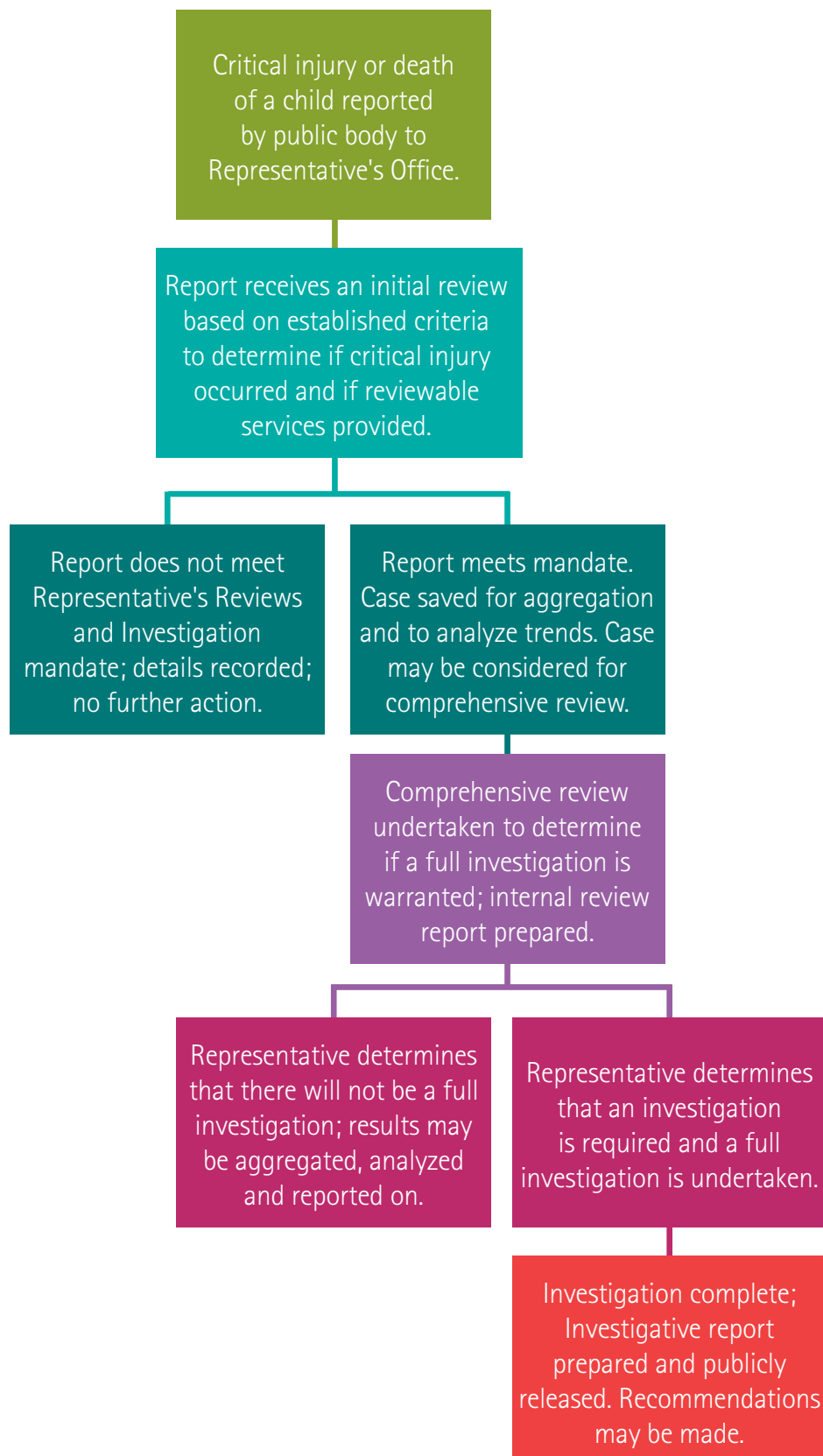
- increasing communication between hospital and community mental health services, including psychiatric engagement, to support continuity of service and ensure transitions are not experienced as disruptive
- ensuring youth voice is given sufficient consideration throughout service provision, particularly during times of transition like hospital discharge.

The review noted the importance of well-coordinated step-up/step-down services for high-needs youth. Post-review letters were provided to all public services involved in providing care for Mauve in hopes the detailed information will inform processes and services for similar situations.

The Reviews and Investigations team also aggregates and analyzes groups of injuries and deaths and issues reports with recommendations to improve the child-serving system. The team completed two aggregate projects in 2020/21. Each project provided a descriptive analysis of injuries and deaths within specific populations – one for Métis children and youth, and one for First Nations children and youth.



## The Review and Investigation Process



## Highlights of Reviews and Investigation Activities in 2020/21

### *Reviews and Investigations Cases and Trends*

During 2020/21, Reviews and Investigations received 4,524 critical injury and death reports for children and youth who received services during the preceding 12 months. Each of these reports received an initial review and, of these reports, 1,883 – or almost 42 per cent – met the Representative's mandate.

Figure 5 details the number of cases by fiscal year of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services that met the mandate after an initial review for the years 2010/11 to 2020/21.

#### **Fast Fact**

In 2020/21, Reviews and Investigations started tracking injury and death reports in which gang affiliation was noted as a challenge; there were 49 cases reported in which gangs negatively impacted a young person's life.

(Reviews and Investigations statistics)

**Figure 5: In-Mandate Critical Injuries and Deaths – 2010/11 to 2020/21**

Fiscal Year	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Critical Injuries	136	413	300	318	292	665	754	818	1,037	1,234	1,788
Deaths	88	101	100	99	82	138	112	118	109	95	95
Total	224	514	400	417	374	803	866	936	1,146	1,329	1,883

**Note:** The sharp increase in in-mandate injuries and rise in in-mandate deaths in the 2015/16 fiscal year was due to the increase in the number of critical incident reports received by the Representative's Office following the June 2015 update and implementation of the Reportable Circumstances Policy by MCFD. The reason for the sharp increase in in-mandate critical injuries in 2020/21 is not clear but could be due to a combination of factors including an overall increase in the number of reportables from youth who were not in care (such as those supported to live with family, accessing child and youth mental health services and involved in the youth justice system) and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and toxic drug supply.



Figure 6 below shows the breakdown of the 1,883 reports by injury or death, by Indigeneity and care status.

Figure 6: Critical Injuries and Deaths by Indigeneity – 2020/21

	Critical Injuries					Deaths				
	Indigenous				Non-Indigenous	Indigenous			Unknown	Non-Indigenous
	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Indigenous: Unspecified		First Nations	Métis	Inuit		
In-care	574	86	6	0	389	11	1	0	0	7
Not in-care	255	70	2	4	402	13	2	0	1	60
Total	829	156	8	4	791	24	3	0	1	67

<sup>a</sup> A child/youth is identified as "Indigenous: Unspecified" when MCFD practitioners are aware that a child is Indigenous but do not know that child's specific heritage (i.e., whether that child is First Nations, Métis or Inuit). This is usually the case when a child is newly connected to MCFD.

<sup>a</sup> A child/youth is identified as "Unknown" when MCFD practitioners do not know whether that child/youth is Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

Figures 7 to 11 provide more detail on the type of classification and breakdown by gender and age of in-mandate critical injury and death reports received by the Representative in 2020/21.

Figure 7: In-Mandate Critical Injuries by RCY Classification and Gender – 2020/21

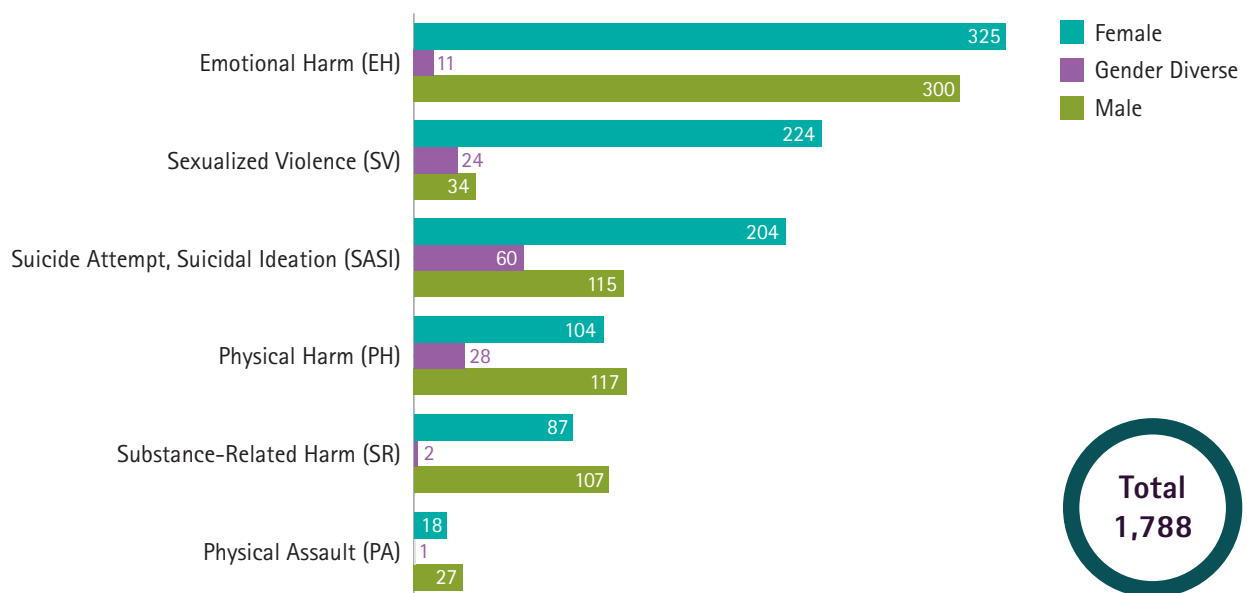


Figure 8: Percentage of In-Mandate Injuries by Gender – 2020/21

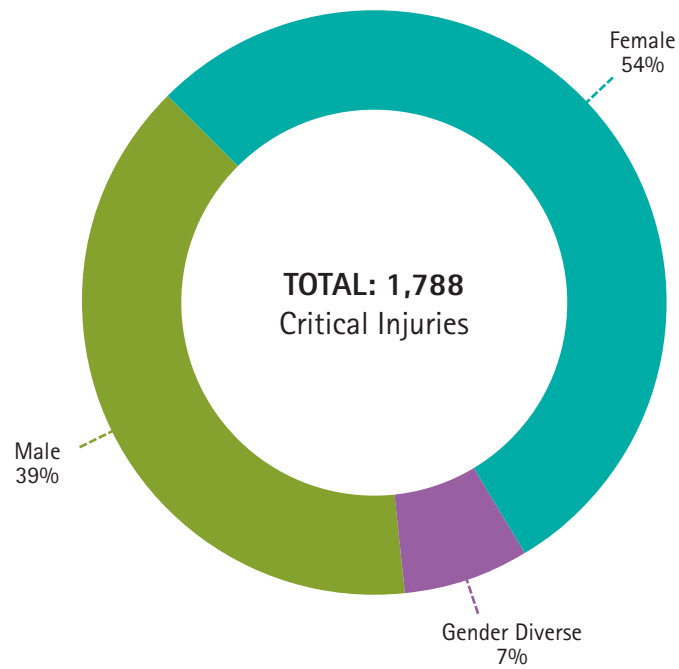


Figure 9: In-Mandate Deaths by RCY Classification and Gender – 2020/21



Figure 10: Percentage of In-Mandate Deaths by Gender – 2019/20

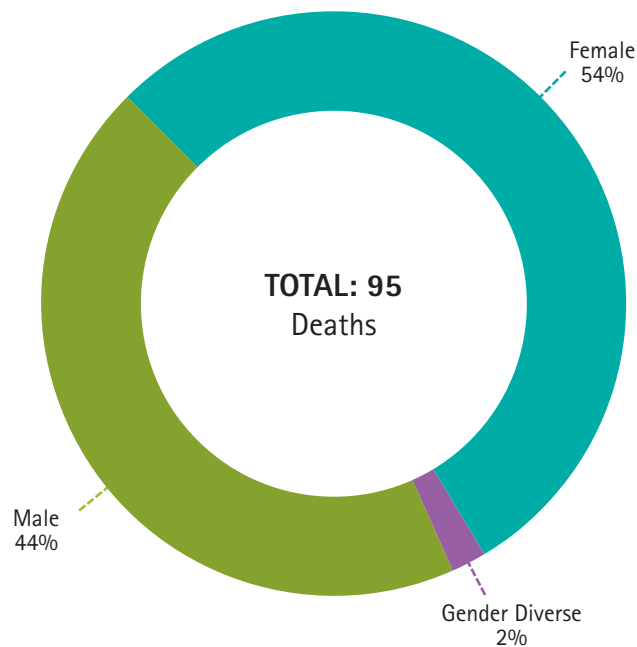
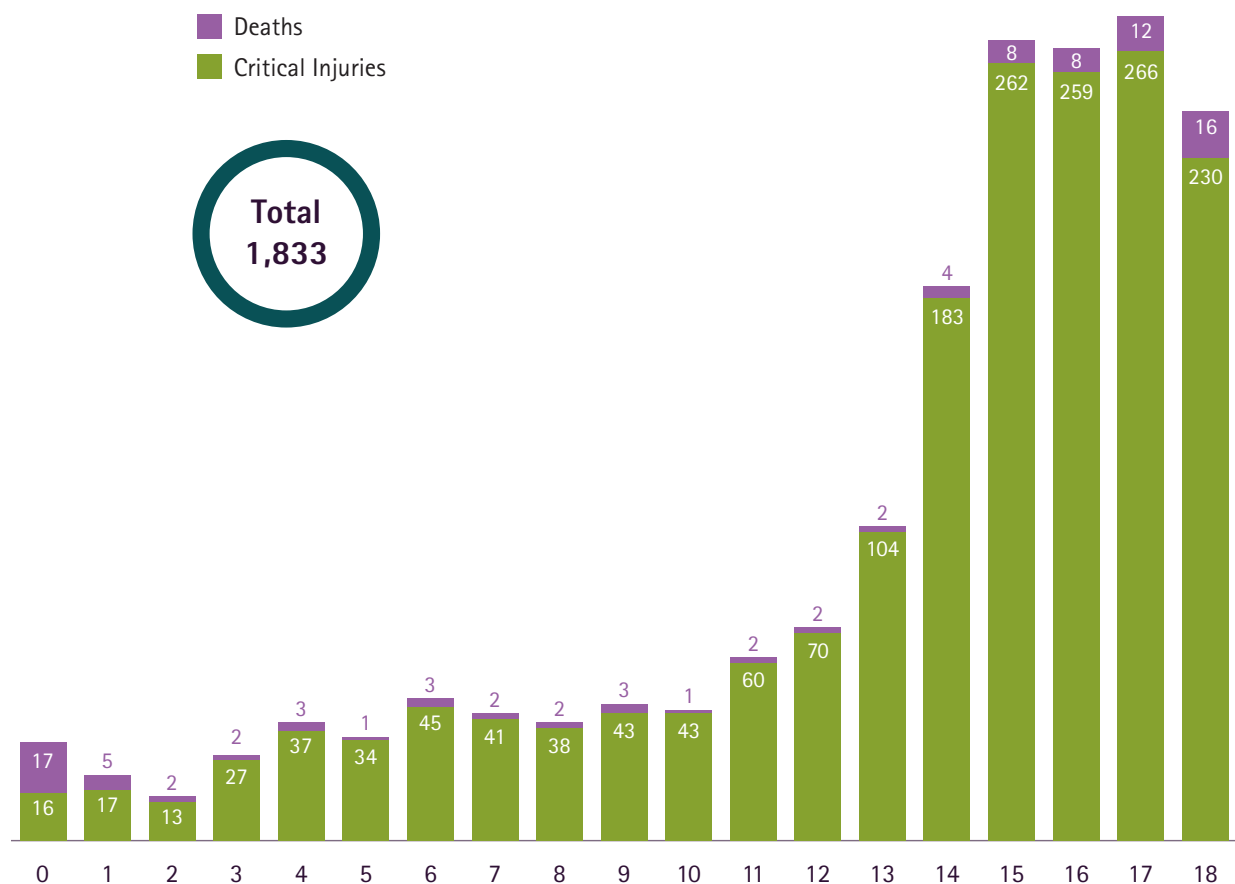


Figure 11: Age Distribution of In-Mandate Critical Injuries and Deaths – 2020/21



## Behind the Scenes with RCY Staff – Reviews and Investigations

### Deb

Dancing in the halls, casual conversations and in-person social events with co-workers – those are some of the things Deb Strawson has missed over the past 18 months working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of RCY's longest-serving staff members (12 years!), Deb is Coordinator, Reviews and Investigations, and assists the team with scheduling and coordination to keep projects moving along through different phases of research, interviews and consultation.



*"The Representative keeps her hand on the pulse as we work in collaboration with the people and organizations that need to be considered and consulted in the work we do,"* Deb says, explaining that her work is always evolving.

Deb worked at the B.C. Legislature for many years before joining RCY, including for a minister of Children and Family Development. She understood some of the complexities of the issues before making the move and was interested in helping with the significant work of the organization.

*"It's really meaningful for me to be part of an organization where we're striving for positive change and are always adapting to what's happening in B.C. for children and youth,"* Deb says, adding that her work with a team of staff from diverse educational and experiential backgrounds keeps the work interesting as they share different perspectives while working towards a common cause. She is always grateful to be living and working on the traditional territories of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations people.

Arriving home from a vacation in Mexico just as the pandemic was unfolding to learn she wouldn't be returning to the office, Deb says one of the strangest results of working from home is *"recognizing newer co-workers from only the neck up!"*

Deb has also been surprised by a plus side of working from home – that, in some ways, connecting online has held up the integrity of the Office. *"Respect and care for one another within the organization during this time has been wonderful to experience,"* she says. *"It's been a priority for the Representative to regularly keep staff informed and engaged as we work from home – and it's really been working out well."*

In addition to her RCY work and family life with a husband, two adult children and four young grandchildren, Deb also has an interest in wellness and an adventurous spirit. She shares her knowledge as a Registered Holistic Nutritionist with family and friends and says that one of her greatest adventures was portaging and paddling on the Sayward Forest Canoe Route, a loop that spans almost 50 kilometres through 11 lakes on beautiful Vancouver Island.





## Reviews and Investigations Initiatives

Between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, Reviews and Investigations released four investigative reports:

- *A Way to Cope: Exploring non-suicidal self injury in B.C. youth*
- *Invisible Children: A Descriptive Analysis of Injury and Death Reports for Métis Children and Youth in British Columbia, 2015 to 2017*
- *Illuminating Service Experience: A Descriptive Analysis of Injury and Death Reports for First Nations Children and Youth in B.C., 2015 to 2017*
- *Detained: Rights of children and youth under the Mental Health Act*

See the "Public Reports" section, page 57, for further information and a brief description of each investigative report.

During 2020/21, Reviews and Investigations also worked on the following projects:

- An investigative report into the life and death of Skye, a First Nations youth who died as a result of the toxic drug supply on her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and had been separated from her mother, family and community.

This investigation is the first of its kind for RCY, taking into consideration the harmful impacts of the child welfare system on First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families and exploring a new approach to the investigative process guided by the "6Rs" – the principles of responsibility, relevance, reciprocity, repair, relationships and respect (see page 23). The investigation is also guided by the foundational principles of cultural safety, restorative approaches, trauma-informed practice and working with complexity.

The investigation uses interviews and quantitative data together and intentionally weaves Indigenous ways of being and knowing into the work. It tells Skye's story of separation from her family, culture and community, and seeks to understand the systemic changes that are needed to support the emotional, spiritual and physical needs of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth across the province. The stories shared throughout the investigation illustrate the need for transformative change to improve how children and youth are supported to establish a sense of belonging in all aspects of their lives while in the care of MCFD. *Skye's Legacy: A focus on belonging* was scheduled to be released on June 10, 2021.

### Fast Fact

Compared to Métis youth without government care experience, youth who had ever been in care were more likely to experience mental health concerns, and reported higher rates of self-harming, sexual abuse and suicidal thoughts or attempts in the past year.

(*Invisible Children: A Descriptive Analysis of Injury and Death Reports for Métis Children and Youth in British Columbia, 2015 to 2017*, Representative for Children and Youth, July 2020)

### Fast Fact

Less than 20 per cent of youth with substance-related injuries were noted to be supported by an addictions service at any time in their life.

(Reviews and Investigations statistics)



- A report focusing on child and youth participation in child protection legal processes and family law legal processes. The *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and the *Family Law Act* both have provisions for hearing children's views as a factor in determining the best interests of the child. However, it is unknown how successful these provisions are in providing meaningful avenues for hearing children's views and their right to contribute to decisions that are being made about them. The project team is engaging young people with lived experience in child protection and family law legal processes to produce a report that explores opportunities for children to participate in *CFCS Act* and/or *Family Law Act* legal processes in meaningful and inclusive ways. The Representative plans to release this report in fall 2021.

### BRIGHT SPOT Innovative Housing Solutions for Youth

In the 2020/21 fiscal year, RCY noted the use of new and innovative housing solutions for youth in B.C.

One such home is Shun Huznuta, a youth transition house in Fort St. James established by the Delegated Aboriginal Agency, Nezul Be Hunuyeh. Shun Huznuta was created to support youth from the Nak'azdli and Tl'azt'en Nations in their transitions to adulthood. The name Shun Huznuta was chosen by an Elder from the Tl'azt'en Nation and refers to a journey taken in isolation by young boys until a dream or song comes to them. This dream or song then guides them and shows them the path they were meant to follow in their lives. The name Shun Huznuta translates in English as "looking for their song." The staff at Shun Huznuta provide life skills, traditional and cultural supports to youth in the home.

Another innovative housing model for youth and young adults is the supportive recovery program offered by Threshold Housing Society in the Greater Victoria region. Threshold's supportive recovery program is a low-barrier housing model aimed at youth 16- to 24-years-old who use substances. This program offers coordinated and accessible wraparound services and care in a home environment that meet youth "where they are at." It also allows youth on Vancouver Island to access robust services without having to move to the Lower Mainland and away from community and family. These supports are crucial.

RCY sees the repercussions of the toxic drug supply crisis in the form of reports of critical injuries daily. A 2020 study from the BC Centre on Substance Use found that more than 1,000 young people, ranging from 10- to 29-years-old, have lost their lives to overdose since the 2016 public health emergency was declared. Over the last year, the Representative is heartened to see referrals being made by social workers for youth to attend Threshold's program.



In the 2020/21 fiscal year, as part of the Representative's initiative to enhance cross-program collaboration, the internal advocacy referral process was implemented under which the Reviews and Investigations team makes referrals to the Advocacy team when reviewed injuries indicate there may be a need for advocacy support. For referred cases, an RCY Advocate reviews the available information and will reach out to the social worker involved to seek further information and to determine next steps. Indigenous children and youth are over-represented in these referrals.

An example of this type of referral was the case of a young child who experienced a sexual assault in a group home. Reviews and Investigations did not see that adequate resources for the child were in place after the injury or that appropriate protective measures were taken. The Reviews and Investigations team made a referral to Advocacy and the Advocate was able to ensure that the child received the needed supports. The connection between Reviews and Investigations and Advocacy is an important way for RCY to fulfill its mandate of supporting and advocating for the rights and interests of children and youth.

Throughout 2020/21, Reviews and Investigations also continued to work with representatives from MCFD, the Ministry of Health and health authorities to develop processes to enable health authorities to report the critical injuries and deaths of children who receive mental health and substance use services. The Representative's goal is for the health authorities to begin this required reporting by early 2022.

### Fast Fact

In 2020/21, Reviews and Investigations made 101 referrals to the Advocacy team. Review of critical injury reports revealed opportunities for individual advocacy related to issues such as placement, access to family or culture, or planning for a youth's transition to adulthood.

(Reviews and Investigations statistics)



Artwork by JR for Without a Map report



# Monitoring and Strategic Initiatives

## Overview

The Monitoring and Strategic Initiatives team (MSI) fulfils the Representative's mandate to *"monitor, review, audit and conduct research on the provision of designated child and youth services in B.C., with the goal of improving the effectiveness and responsiveness of these services and ultimately improving outcomes for children and youth."* The work of the MSI team focuses largely on systemic changes that are necessary to ensure that all children and youth receive the services that they require for their well-being.

The work of the MSI team is carried out in three ways:

- *Research and Evaluation*: undertaking evidence-based research, often in collaboration with other independent bodies or research institutions, to better understand immediate and long-term outcomes for children and youth, and the influence of the existing designated and prescribed service infrastructure on these outcomes
- *Review and Audit*: conducting province-wide systemic reviews and audits to assess the effectiveness and responsiveness of programs and services for children, youth, young adults and their families. This may include measuring compliance with standards, policies and legislation; assessing the alignment of policy with practice; and determining whether the needs of children, youth, young adults and families are being met
- *Monitoring and Oversight*: monitoring key elements of the government's activities and performance in providing designated and prescribed services. Government activities are assessed against research and evidence-based practice with a focus on how well the government sets and achieves its stated goals. The MSI team prepares reports that include recommendations for improvements in policy and practice.

The MSI team also stewards the RCY Systemic Issues Working Group (SIWG) whose purpose is to:

- provide a forum for cross-RCY discussions about systemic issues – drawing on the experience and work of the RCY staff involved
- identify systemic issues that emerge from the RCY Advocacy and Reviews and Investigations files

### Fast Fact

Research shows that exposure to trauma during childhood has long-term consequences, and adults who experienced trauma as children are at higher risk of physical and psychological problems.

(*A Parent's Duty*, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)

### Fast Fact

Studies estimate that up to 90 per cent of youth in care have some exposure to trauma. While children and youth often enter care already having experienced trauma in their lives, experiences while in care including placement instability or moving frequently while in care, concurrent changes in schools and social workers, and continual experiences of loss can cause further trauma.

(*A Parent's Duty*, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)



- support RCY teams in development of research papers on high-priority topics – including providing context, scope and relevance to RCY strategic priorities and recommended actions
- develop an understanding of how to describe and address systemic issues.

Over the past year, the SIWG has addressed topics related to supports for youth receiving post-transition services, the experiences of gender-diverse youth and children and youth with support needs.

The work of the MSI team is grounded in complexity and systems thinking. The experiences of children and youth are driven by a complex range of factors including socioeconomic factors, experiences in the multiple environments in which they spend time, experiences under policies that apply to them, and access to appropriate, high-quality programs and services. For First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Urban Indigenous children and youth, there is increased complexity in the ongoing effects of trauma associated with the intergenerational impacts of colonialism and residential schools. By understanding the interplay of a range of issues, the Representative's monitoring work is guided by an approach that avoids simplistic and singular solutions.

The MSI team is responsible for ongoing assessment of progress toward improved outcomes for children and youth. This includes preparing special public reports and making recommendations to government service providers to improve services.

The MSI team also identifies and tracks key issues and trends and brings these to the attention of the Representative. The team may prepare submissions for the Representative on issues of concern.

## Highlights of MSI Activities 2020/21

### *RCY Initiatives*

#### Reports

Between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, the MSI team issued one special report, *A Parent's Duty*, documenting the experience of youth in the B.C. care system navigating the transition from care to adulthood.

See the "Public Reports" section, page 57, for further information and a brief description of this report.

#### **Fast Fact**

Research shows poor outcomes for youth leaving care – higher rates of homelessness, less attachment to the workforce, lower rates of income, poorer mental health and higher rates of involvement in the criminal justice system – as compared to their non-care peers who have transitioned to adulthood.

(*A Parent's Duty*, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)



### Projects and Initiatives

During the 2020/21 fiscal year, the MSI team also worked on the following initiatives:

- **FASD Research Project** – this project examines FASD from two perspectives: the social construction of FASD and the lived experience of young people with FASD and their parents/caregivers. Co-led by a researcher with FASD, the project involves deep connections with children, youth and their caregivers/parents, dialogues with four First Nations communities and multiple interviews with professionals in the field. The final report documents the substantial inequity in programs and funding for children and youth with FASD and the exclusion they feel in all aspects of their lives. This report was scheduled to be released on April 15, 2021.

#### BRIGHT SPOT

##### Inspire Kids – FASD Support Society of BC

Motivated by their involvement with the Representative in work on the FASD research project, over 100 parents and caregivers came together to launch a new non-profit entitled "Inspire Kids," focused on connecting families and directly supporting youth with FASD in B.C.

This group aims to foster a sense of community and connectedness for children with FASD and their caregivers. Inspire Kids wants to give a voice to children with FASD and their families within their community and province so that they are included in meaningful ways with their peers and neighbours. It also seeks to provide direct support to families and individuals with FASD to enhance their quality of life, opportunities and relationships, fostering a lifetime of happiness and health, as well as advance the understanding of the needs of youth with FASD among people who work with neuro-diverse children.

Find out more about Inspire Kids on their [Facebook page](#).

- **A focus on children in their early years and their families** – the quality of experiences in the early years, from birth to about six-years-old, influences lifelong health and well-being. From a rights-based perspective, a focus on young children and their start in life is also about ensuring equity from the start. Through ongoing review of critical injury and death reports, RCY consistently identifies moments in the early lives of children where opportunities to provide a range of cultural, emotional, physical and/or mental health supports were missed. In these instances, providing vital care and support to infants/children and their caregivers may have changed the outcomes for these young people.

Recognizing the importance of the early years, RCY has begun an initiative to engage researchers, service providers and First Nations and Métis leaders in examining the complexities of the early years system and identifying aspirations for a system that would improve support for families across the province.





- **Care Plan Review** – The primary research for this multi-year quantitative and qualitative review of care plans and planning was substantially completed in the 2020/21 fiscal year. Data collection involved an examination of care plans and planning over time, including survey questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with partners such as children and youth, guardianship social workers and team leaders, foster caregivers and key informants at the executive level within MCFD.

The MSI team is now undertaking data analysis and preparing findings with a focus on cultural planning for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children; transitional planning for youth aging into adulthood; and permanency planning across multiple age categories. The learnings from the Care Plan Review will be released in the fall and winter of 2021 in a variety of ways. The intention of this process is to build an understanding of the foundations of quality care planning for practitioners and professionals in MCFD and other connected practice areas.

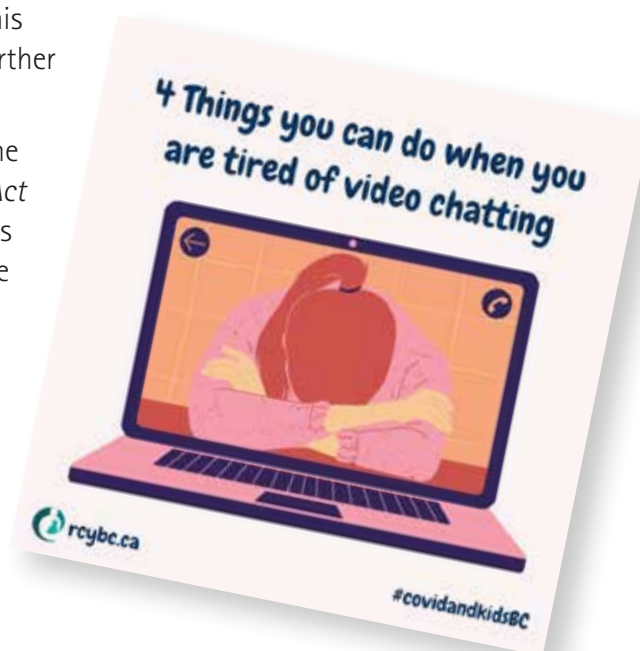
The MSI team also played an important role in cross-RCY projects including:

- providing support to the Reviews and Investigations team with information gathering, research and the development of an investigative report (*Skye's Legacy: A focus on belonging*) on the life and death of Skye, a First Nations youth who died as a result of the toxic drug supply on her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday
- conducting a rapid review of available literature and media reports related to family and child violence during the global pandemic. This review identified immediate and long-term impacts of economic insecurities and social isolation as they relate to incidents of family and child violence in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. MSI's review was used to develop a joint public statement made by the Representative and the Human Rights Commissioner, and to provide information to the public about accessing support and help for those experiencing family violence. This initial work was used to develop a basis for further inquiry as the pandemic progressed.
- supporting the Representative's response to the proposed amendments to the *Mental Health Act* by providing a review of RCY's previous reports and statements regarding youth substance use and the lack of available or youth-accessible services and supports. This work further supported the Representative's position on establishing a full array of voluntary substance use treatment and harm reduction services for youth in B.C.

### Fast Fact

Children who experience socioeconomic inequalities are much more likely to develop emotional and behavioural concerns.

(COVID-19 and the Impact on Children's Mental Health, Representative for Children and Youth, September 2020)





### Collaboration and Partnerships

The MSI team stewards a number of research initiatives including collaborations with the following post-secondary institutions and research institutes:

- Simon Fraser University – Children's Health Policy Centre
- University of British Columbia – Human Early Learning Partnership and School of Nursing
- UBC Okanagan – School of Social Work
- University of Northern BC – National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health
- University of Victoria – School of Child and Youth Care and School of Social Work.

These institutions work with RCY on a range of topics related to the well-being of children and youth, ensuring that RCY reports and statements are grounded in the most recent science and evidence. Current topics include child and youth mental health, the experiences of gender-diverse youth, the early years, and children and youth experiencing complex challenges.

As well, the MSI team is responsible for leading several partnerships with community organizations and service agencies including those that support children and youth with support needs; families with children in their early years; and those that provide a wide range of services to youth connected to child welfare. These relationships are of profound importance in all aspects of the team's work ensuring that a wide range of perspectives are obtained and that RCY's work is informed by and builds on the work being undertaken by these organizations.

### Fast Fact

In the 10 years between 2008/09 and 2017/18, the number of children and youth who were detained involuntarily under the *Mental Health Act* increased from 973 to 2,545 – or 162 per cent.

(*Detained: Rights of children and youth under the Mental Health Act*, Representative for Children and Youth, January 2021)

### Fast Fact

The vast majority of children and youth in care – 89 per cent – are in care by court order due to abuse or neglect in the family home, with neglect accounting for almost 75 per cent of these cases. The other 11 per cent of children are in care through a voluntary care or special needs agreement with parents or guardians who ask for government help.

(*A Parent's Duty*, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)



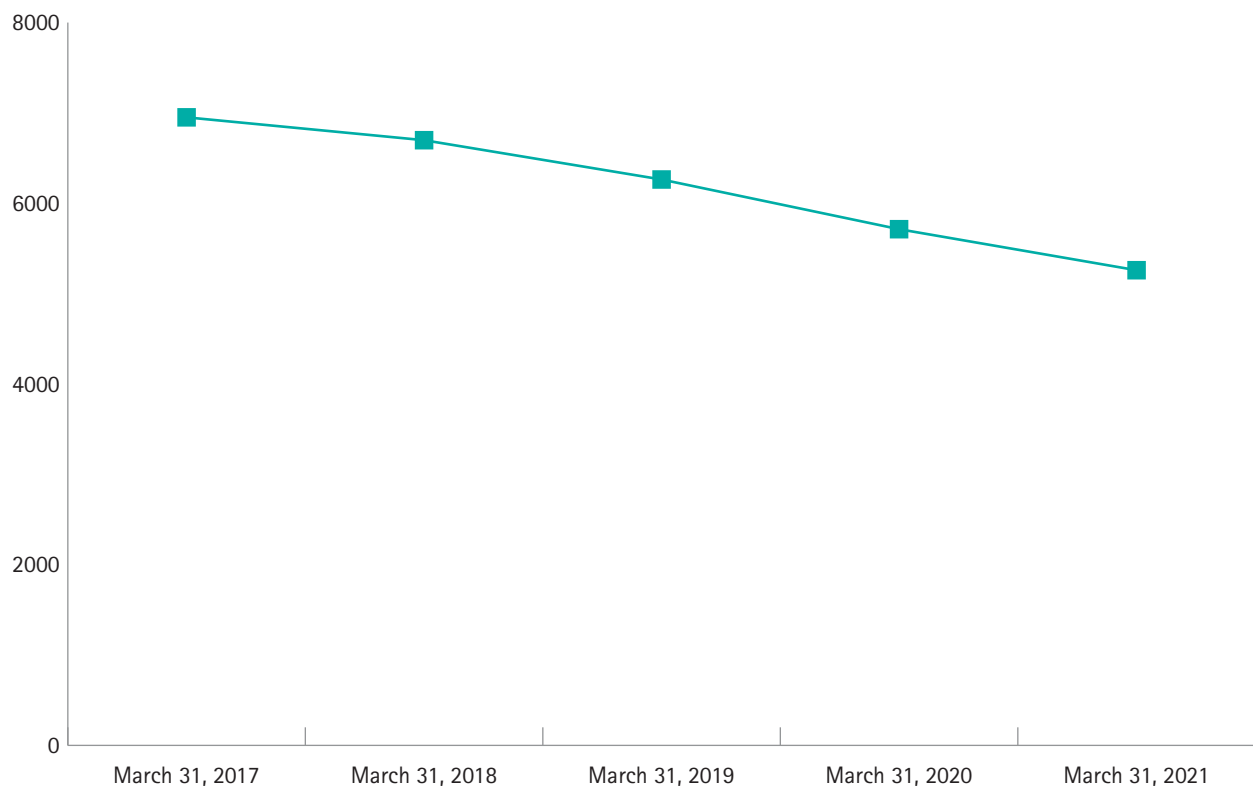
## Monitoring Trends

### Children and Youth in care

A key trend monitored by the MSI team is the number of children and youth in care, with a focus on the disproportionate representation of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care.

Figure 12 shows the total number of children and youth in care at the end of fiscal years 2016/17 through 2020/21.

**Figure 12: Children and Youth in Care at Fiscal Year-End – 2016 to 2021**

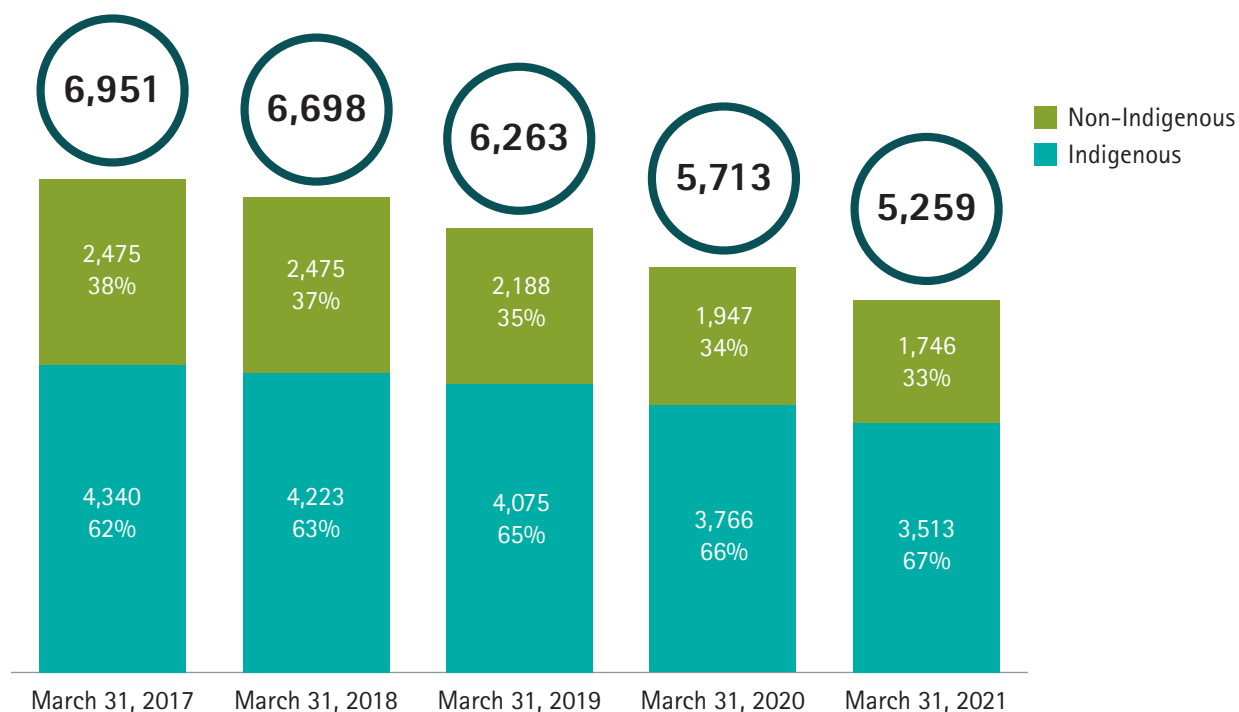


The total number of children and youth in care has continued to decline over five years from 6,951 in 2017 to 5,259 in 2021. However, although the number of children and youth in care has decreased over time, the number of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth has decreased to a lesser extent than non-Indigenous children and youth.

Figure 13 shows the number and proportion of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth and non-Indigenous children and youth in care at the end of fiscal years 2016/17 through 2020/21.



Figure 13: Number and Proportion of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Children and Youth in Care at Fiscal Year-End – 2016 to 2021<sup>3</sup>



These figures highlight several significant and ongoing issues:

- the number of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care continues to be disproportionate to the number of non-Indigenous children and youth in care. Although First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth represent only about 10 per cent of children and youth between the ages of birth and 19 years in B.C., they represent approximately 67 per cent of children and youth in care as of March 31, 2021<sup>4</sup>
- the proportion of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care has continued to increase from 62 per cent on March 31, 2017 to 67 per cent on March 31, 2021
- between 2017 and 2020, the total number of children and youth in care at each fiscal year-end decreased for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth as well as non-Indigenous children and youth. However, the number of non-Indigenous children and youth in care decreased by 33 per cent over this period, while the number of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care only decreased by 19 per cent.

The over-representation of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care and services and programs for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth will continue to be a focus of the Representative's Office during the coming years.

<sup>3</sup> Of the 3,513 Indigenous children and youth in care on March 31, 2021, 2,986 were First Nations, 439 were Métis, 50 were Nisga'a and 38 were Inuit.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada, Census 2016 data tables.



## Behind the Scenes with RCY Staff – Monitoring and Strategic Initiatives

### Amanda

In May 2019, Amanda attended a ceremony at the B.C. Legislature to celebrate the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nisga'a Treaty. The event had a profound effect on Amanda, a former child protection social worker, now a Research Officer on RCY's Care Plan Review team who comes from Nisga'a and white settler heritage.



*"I attended this recognition event with some apprehension but felt connected as soon as I heard the Nisga'a drum and the Kwhlii Gibaygum Nisga'a dancers," recalls Amanda. "The authentic words of pride and hope and the presence of the Nisga'a Lisims Government and dancers was so empowering. Hearing the Nisga'a language just felt like home – even though I don't speak it or understand it.*

*"Despite lifelong disconnection to my Nisga'a culture, in that moment I felt a level of pride and connection I had never felt – so much so, I introduced myself to President Eva Clayton, told her how honoured I was to meet her, and asked for a picture with her in front of the Nisga'a flag in the Legislature's Hall of Honour. The picture captures the connection of two fellow Nisga'as meeting for the first time."*

The event led Amanda to share more of herself as she embraces Indigenous ways of knowing in her everyday life. This is her story:

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I am Nisga'a. Nisga'a Lisims Government governs by the principles of the Ayuuk, the time-honoured Nisga'a code. Ayuukhl (traditional law) Nisga'a shows us that every being has a rightful and meaningful place in society.

I am Gisk'aast – killer whale (and owl) from Gitlaxt'aamix Village in the Nass Valley of northern B.C. K'utk'unukus, the owl, keeps watch over the lax-siilda (ocean water). The gift linked with the Gisk'aast is the "breathing in" and "giving life" to knowledge, symbolized by the hole on the dorsal fin and the sound it makes. I feel this purpose in the work I do on my team and within RCY.

I learned much from Grams and my mother in urban Victoria, but visiting our traditional land and connecting with my family and the communities there is where I truly began to understand the power of the land and belonging. On the Nisga'a Nation website is a picture of my Sigidimnak (matriarch), my grandmother. Grams, Alberta Eli, is pictured in the middle with her two older sisters: [www.nisgaanation.ca/social-services](http://www.nisgaanation.ca/social-services). Grams and her sister to the right, Bertha Stephens have passed, and her sister to her left, my great auntie (Jiits) Pauline, recently joined them.



When I started at RCY in 2018, I was not consistent in identifying myself as Indigenous. I have now committed to becoming a proud Nisga'a citizen in all settings, while still acknowledging and being aware of my white privilege, being a British settler on my paternal side. For insight into coming to terms with white privilege as half Indigenous, I share this article, linked [here](#). These words really resonate: *"Coming from two distinct places creates some duality inside. ... Am I Indian or am I white?"*

I appreciate my Indigenous co-workers, who provide a sense of community that fills my heart, and others I have felt safe with to share my journey. It is through you all that I gain confidence in myself and in my work. Each day, I ask for the support of my ancestors to assist me in stepping into my power that assists me in the most important learning journey with my children, Mikayla and Aiden.

I thank RCY for giving me this opportunity to tell my story. This is a true act of reconciliation, cultural safety and walking the talk.

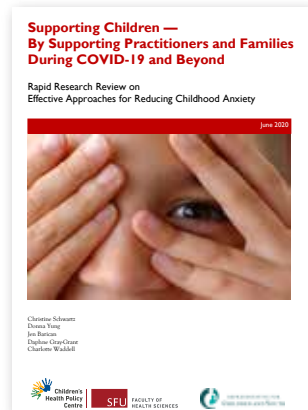


# Public Reports

## Investigative and Monitoring Reports

In the 2020/21 fiscal year, the Representative publicly released eight reports including two that were prepared by Simon Fraser University's Children's Health Policy Centre and sponsored by the RCY, in addition to the annual report and service plan.

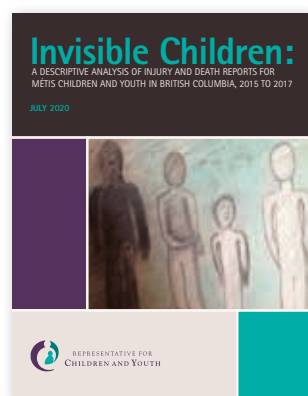
All reports and submissions are available on the RCY website at: <https://rcybc.ca/reports-and-publications>.



### *Supporting Children – By Supporting Practitioners and Families During COVID-19 and Beyond* (released June 26, 2020)

This report, by Simon Fraser University's Children's Health Policy Centre, was sponsored by the Representative in recognition of the increased mental health challenges young people are facing at this time. It examined innovative anxiety interventions that could be provided using virtual or self-directed methods and identifies practical and effective interventions to assist families and practitioners helping young people with anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The report found that cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is most effective at preventing and treating childhood anxiety and can easily be adapted for both virtual and self-directed delivery. When children receive CBT as part of prevention or treatment, they learn skills they can apply for life, well beyond the pandemic. When CBT is not successful, the report found that the medication fluoxetine can help, and can be prescribed and monitored virtually. Adaptation details and resources for practitioners and caregivers are found in the report, including a program that has been enriched to be culturally meaningful for Indigenous children and youth in B.C.



### *Invisible Children: A Descriptive Analysis of Injury and Death Reports for Métis Children and Youth in British Columbia, 2015 to 2017* (released July 23, 2020)

This report is the result of an aggregate review that looked at injury and death data over a three-year period from 2015 to 2017. Similar to other aggregate reviews, the intent of examining aggregate data is to help prevent similar tragedies in the future and to inform improvements to services. However, this review was different in two distinct ways: it focused on the injury and death reports of children and youth who are

identified as Métis and marked the first time that the Office has worked collaboratively with Métis leadership, community members and service providers on the design and direction of a report, and the way data could be best used to inform planning and future service delivery. In producing the report, the Representative consulted extensively with Métis Nation BC, the Métis Commission for Children and Families of BC and Métis-specific Delegated Aboriginal Agencies both to share the data and hear





their ideas for analysis that would make it useful to them, including providing data to help inform them as they prepare to resume jurisdiction over their own child welfare matters.

The report recognized that Métis children and youth and their data have historically been categorized as "Indigenous" and actively aims to redress that practice with targeted research into Métis-specific data. Métis organizations specifically requested that statistical comparisons between Métis children and youth and other Indigenous or non-Indigenous cohorts not be made in this report, and RCY respected those wishes.

When examined through a Métis-specific lens, the data revealed some troubling facts and highlighted areas for improvement including that Métis children and youth haven't been well-served in terms of cultural planning and connecting them with their cultural communities. The data also raised questions such as: Would better recruitment and retention of Métis foster families lead to improved health and well-being of Métis children and youth? How can B.C.'s child-serving systems best facilitate Métis-specific cultural planning for all Métis children receiving government services?

A second report for the same time period examining similar data relating to First Nations children and comparing them to non-Indigenous children and youth was released in December 2020.



### *A Way to Cope – Exploring non-suicidal self-injury in B.C. youth* (released Sept. 16, 2020)

This report shared what RCY investigators learned through research, data analysis and case studies about youth with identified non-suicidal self-injuries (NSSI) to inform decision-makers, service providers and the public. The combined research painted a picture of youth requiring complex and nuanced supports and services, experiencing several injuries, carrying serious mental health diagnoses and having challenging family dynamics. Multiple service systems are often involved to meet

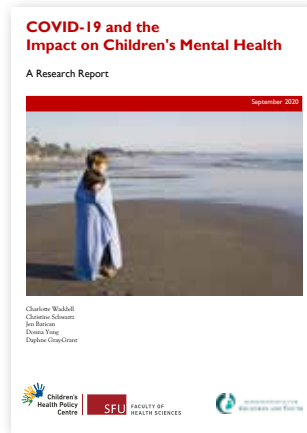
their needs, including MCFD, health authorities, school districts, non-profit agencies and private practitioners, yet the research reflected gaps in services and supports for youth who engage in NSSI and highlighted difficulties with wait lists while attempting to access necessary Child and Youth Mental Health services. The bright spot that the research showed is that with effective supports, many – and perhaps most – youth are able to recover.

The report, while not directive in nature, outlined a number of considerations for developing a comprehensive model of care. While MCFD recognizes the importance of a system-wide, trauma-informed approach to delivering services and supports to children and families, this has yet to be fully integrated into child welfare and mental health practice. The Representative hopes that this report will foster systemic change to better support children and youth with complex needs, as well as their families. While health authority mental health programs and school supports were out of scope for this study, it is hoped that all three child-serving systems will explore ways to work together to support those who engage in NSSI.

The Representative plans to follow-up in 2022 with an update on services for children and youth who self-harm.







### *COVID-19 and the Impact on Children's Mental Health* (released Nov. 12, 2020)

This report, by Simon Fraser University's Children's Health Policy Centre and sponsored by RCY, found that COVID-19 will have significant mental health consequences for B.C. children and youth, concluding that the pandemic creates a critical need for government to invest in B.C.'s over-stretched and underfunded child and youth mental health services system. The report reviewed several studies on mental health outcomes for children and youth after earlier pandemics and natural disasters and identified the mental health challenges children and youth can be expected to experience during and after COVID-19, including anxiety, post-traumatic stress, depression and behavioural problems. The report indicated that because untreated mental health problems can persist into adulthood if left untreated, supports for children and youth will significantly reduce future costs.

The report found that some children and youth may be disproportionately affected, including those with neuro-diverse needs, pre-existing mental health conditions, youth in foster care and those affected by adversities such as socioeconomic disadvantage and racism. Children who experience socioeconomic inequalities are much more likely to develop emotional and behavioural concerns and the pandemic has the potential to amplify inequalities – in turn putting less advantaged children at even greater risk for mental health concerns. As well, COVID-19 may particularly affect Indigenous peoples, who disproportionately experience harms related to colonialism such as unsafe housing, lack of access to clean water and extreme food insecurity – conditions that put children's mental health at risk.

In addition to providing necessary prevention and treatment services and addressing underlying social disparities, the report recommended tracking child and youth mental health outcomes, to inform current and future services.



### *Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic* (released Dec. 3, 2020)

*Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic* was created in collaboration with Community Partners – organizations that work with families of children and youth with support needs and featured the voices of families themselves. *Left Out* noted that children and youth with support needs – who number in the thousands – were struggling long before the pandemic and that during the crisis, these families, who rely on supports provided by MCFD and the ministries of Education and Health, have felt abandoned and left to figure out their own solutions.

The pandemic has revealed a system that fails children with disabilities, denying them opportunities that others take for granted. The report called on the provincial government to immediately begin working with families and community organizations to address the urgent needs of children and



youth with support needs who have been neglected during the pandemic and to begin a system overhaul aimed at providing inclusive, equitable and needs-based services.

The Community Partners urged eight immediate actions to support CYSN families:

- more and better communication between MCFD and CYSN families, community providers, family networks and advocates
- one-year extension to fall 2021 of all pandemic-related benefits and processes for CYSN families
- creation of a working table bringing together families, community organizations, advocates and funding ministries for regular check-ins and problem-solving
- funding support for community organizations to help families find alternative services
- declaration of CYSN families as "essential workers" for the purposes of allowing them to access critically important services during pandemic lockdowns
- a review of virtual service provisions in the first months of the pandemic to inform an improved approach as the pandemic continues
- streamlined processes for emergency benefits and approvals
- exploration of the concept of support "bubbles" for in-home services to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19.



### *Illuminating Service Experience: A Descriptive Analysis of Injury and Death Reports for First Nations Children and Youth in B.C., 2015 to 2017* (released Dec. 8, 2020)

This report was the result of an aggregate review that looked at injury and death data over a three-year period from 2015 to 2017 focusing on the injury and death reports of children and youth identified by MCFD as First Nations, and used injuries and deaths reported for non-Indigenous children and youth as a comparison group.

This was the second of two reports in which the Representative worked collaboratively with, and in service of, First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous communities. The sister report to this one – *Invisible Children: A Descriptive Analysis of Injury and Death Reports for Métis Children and Youth in British Columbia, 2015 to 2017* – was released in July 2020. Too often since colonization, research relationships – broadly speaking – have been unequal, and research produced has not always been helpful for the communities involved. With this report, the Representative worked closely with First Nations communities to produce what they said they need.

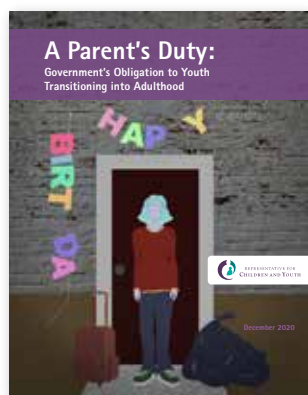
RCY staff conducted preliminary analyses of injury types and basic demographics and then shared results with First Nations child-serving organizations and leadership. These meetings guided and informed the direction of the report including providing First Nations leadership and service providers with information to inform and support their work on resumption of child welfare jurisdiction.

Among the findings, the data showed the majority of injuries reported for First Nations children and youth were for those in the care of MCFD or a DAA. The highest number of injuries were reported for



First Nations children in permanent care under a Continuing Custody Order (CCO). It also revealed a striking difference in the number of injuries reported for First Nations and non-Indigenous children who were CCO, with more than two times the number of injuries reported for First Nations children and youth who were CCO than non-Indigenous children and youth who were CCO.

The data reviewed also raised questions. For example, is there a difference in the number and type of injuries reported for First Nations children and youth served by MCFD versus DAAs? Is there a difference in the number and type of injuries reported for those children and youth who have active family or community involvement in their lives and those who do not? What is working well to protect First Nations children and youth from harms?



### *A Parent's Duty: Government's Obligation to Youth Transitioning into Adulthood* (released Dec. 15, 2020)

This report pulled together decades of research findings – along with findings from nine previous B.C. reports done on the same subject in the last six years – to argue for urgently needed, and long-overdue changes to supports for youth transitioning out of government care to provide them with the same kind of sustained support that young people who aren't in care typically receive from their families.

For the over 800 youth a year who turn 19 while in government care, that birthday presents a frightening precipice. Young people coming out of care are disproportionately at risk of homelessness, have lower education levels, reduced earnings potential and poorer mental health.

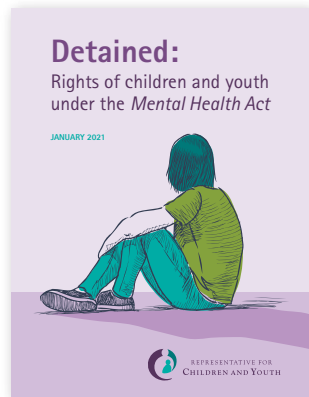
Providing support past age 19 for youth transitioning from care is a moral and economic imperative. Young people transitioning out of care are owed the same ongoing and flexible supports that other young people are provided by parents in their transition to adulthood to let them develop their independence and safely work through life's challenges. The cost of taking action and investing in these young people will ultimately lead to savings to government and benefits to society.

The report included the following recommendations for young people aging out of care and called on the government to implement these recommendations by April 2022:

- extend and improve transition planning
- provide ongoing adult guidance and support by implementing dedicated youth transition workers through community agencies
- automatically enroll all young people transitioning out of any type of government care in the Agreements with Young Adults program as of their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and continuing until their 27<sup>th</sup> birthday
- consider an extension of voluntary residential care
- provide additional dedicated housing for youth aging out of care through a plan led by BC Housing to end youth homelessness



- provide an enhanced range of trauma-informed and culturally appropriate mental health and substance use services for young people transitioning from care into adulthood
- collect longitudinal data and evaluate services for young people who have transitioned out of care.



### *Detained: Rights of children and youth under the Mental Health Act* (released Jan. 19, 2021)

*Detained: Rights of children and youth under the Mental Health Act* is an investigative report examining the experiences and outcomes of children and youth involuntarily detained under the *Mental Health Act*.

Under the *Mental Health Act*, a young person can be admitted and detained against their will, have treatment imposed on them and be subject to discipline, restraint or periods of isolation. In addition to engaging with young people to understand their experiences with involuntary detention, *Detained* drew on RCY and external data, interviews with key partners and a review of legislation, regulations and guidelines.

The report found that young people are not always aware of their rights, including their rights to second medical opinions, Mental Health Review Board hearings and access to legal counsel, and that they rarely exercise their rights under the Act. *Detained* also found that data is either not collected or varies greatly from one health authority to the next in a number of significant areas including the number of Indigenous children admitted under the *Mental Health Act* and the length of time young people are detained. This lack of data on vulnerable young people leaves a gap in understanding the full effect of B.C.'s *Mental Health Act*.

The bottom line is that the *Mental Health Act* was not designed with the needs of children and youth in mind and is not meeting the needs of young people in this province. Significant changes are necessary to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and youth deeply impacted by the *Mental Health Act* and *Detained* included 14 key recommendations related to admission, rights, treatment and standardization of the collection and reporting of key data to improve the system of involuntary mental health care.

### *Recommendations Tracking*

When a report makes recommendations, RCY tracks and monitors their implementation. The RCY reports on progress by public bodies in taking action to fulfill recommendations on its website. The recommendations tracking and monitoring process is currently being reviewed by RCY and public bodies.



# YOUTH AND PARENT VOICES

## Detained: Rights of children and youth under the *Mental Health Act*

(January 2021)

“I’ve wanted to transition since I was 12-years-old ... The only reason I ever have any anxiety in the first place is ... the all-the-time stress of being in the wrong body without any means of conquering it ... If my doctors had listened, I would have moved on with my life a lot sooner.”  
— Koral

“I just felt so written off like just another Aboriginal youth. ... Now I’m in my 20s I’m like ‘Wow! I have a voice! I’m powerful!’”  
— Adrianna

“I remember being read my rights once, on the day I was admitted, when you’re in your worst mental space. It would be nice if you were reminded of these rights.”  
— Liam

## Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic

(December 2020)

“Many children have lost valuable ground in their development, with regression and mental health issues. It can take months and months to regain these skills.”  
— from RCY November 2020 survey

“Caring for a child who is going to be fully dependent for their whole life should be recognized as a job, because otherwise the government has to take care of our children. I can’t say I haven’t thought about that. But I really don’t want that to happen to our family.”  
— Lucia

## A Parent’s Duty: Government’s Obligation to Youth Transitioning into Adulthood

(December 2020)

“My social worker, I maybe talked to her every two months, and it was always me who had to call. I know I wasn’t seen as high-risk, but those of us who look like lower-risk are still high-risk, we just hide it better.”  
— A former youth in care

“After I get my bachelor’s degree, my plan is to become a child protection worker with MCFD. I’m going to actually get to know the young people on my caseload. They’re not going to be just names on folders.”  
— A former youth in care

“I think the worst part of my life was the first year-and-a-half after I got put on independent living at age 18. That’s an age when you don’t want to look like you need any help. I’m 24 now and have no problem asking for help, but at 18, you want to look like, ‘I got this!’ Except you don’t.”  
— A former youth in care

“The failure of providing adequate care and support to these children/ youth actually involves three ministries [MCFD, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education] with each wanting the other ones to pay. We would support the province to create a working committee to assess and address the chronic intra-ministry conflicts that prevent distribution of adequate care and support services.”  
— from RCY November 2020 survey





## First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations

### A First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous Focus

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations (FNMIR) works to establish and nurture relationships with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous partners in B.C. and to advocate for culturally grounded and effective supports for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families receiving services funded by government that are within RCY's mandate. FNMIR leads the RCY service plan focus of promoting services and supports that address and reduce the over-involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of Indigenous children, youth, young adults and their families and communities.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations conducts research and monitors the system to highlight strengths and challenges in the current First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous child welfare landscape. Team members work to advance RCY's research approaches to be more inclusive of Indigenous ways of being and knowing. FNMIR also supports and engages with Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families on child rights.

The team works collaboratively with all program areas to ensure that the Office is culturally safe, respectful and responsive. In the past year, staff have done this through virtual means including hosting virtual gatherings for various events such as Red Dress Day. First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations has also been working on RCY's internal Cultural Safety Design Team to develop ways to increase cultural safety, knowledge and understanding across teams within the organization.



## Highlights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations Activities in 2020/21

### *Outreach and Engagement*

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations has developed an approach to engaging with communities that offers supports, knowledge and information-sharing. This approach is responsive to the recent changes to the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and new federal legislation, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, and supports Indigenous involvement, the importance of cultural connections and the resumption of child welfare jurisdiction by First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

The FNMIR team supports and monitors the implementation of federal and provincial agreements related to Indigenous peoples taking on authority for child welfare. The team has also developed tools to support community self-advocacy along First Nations and Métis pathways to the resumption of child welfare jurisdiction.

In response to COVID-19, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations pivoted to offer virtual gatherings to continue to connect with Indigenous communities. FNMIR aims to be responsive to the needs of individual communities in ways that work best for those communities. Last year, the team reached out to approximately 139 Bands, Nations and Tribes in B.C. which resulted in the development and nurturing of relationships, as well as requests for information, support and advocacy. In response, FNMIR hosted Nation-specific virtual gatherings to support advocacy efforts being undertaken in communities.

Going forward, as the team continues to engage in a range of outreach activities with Indigenous communities and service providers, it is recognized that virtual connections may continue to be an option for some communities while others may wish to engage in a more traditional way. The FNMIR team has been invited to several communities to gather and provide information, resources and supports when it is safe to do so.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations continues to reach out to Aboriginal Friendship Centres to support their advocacy work with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families. The team is beginning to connect directly with individual Indigenous-serving organizations to provide information, supports and resources.





### *Community Mapping Database*

In 2019, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations created a Community Mapping Database – a central location within RCY for information about First Nations, their communities and their community organizations and supports, including child welfare services.

The community mapping work provides profiles that include information about a First Nation's history, territory, language, governance and community population. The profiles identify the Nations' associated DAAs; other provincial or federal child welfare agreements; memoranda of understanding or protocols; and associated community organizations including youth advisory groups. As well, the profiles include media information, including current closures and information regarding COVID-19 and its impact on each First Nation and Métis government as well as information related to wildfires. The database also includes information related to the discoveries of unmarked graves and information related to progress on the resumption of child welfare jurisdiction. Profiles are regularly updated by First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations team members.

As B.C. moves toward truth and reconciliation, the Community Mapping Database has become an invaluable asset. This information provides community knowledge and awareness assisting FNMIR and other RCY teams to effectively engage with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous communities in a culturally safe way and support them in achieving their priorities respecting Indigenous child welfare.

### **BRIGHT SPOT** **Innovative Indigenous mental health approaches**

#### **Maples Treatment Centre Tlatsini Indigenous program**

The Maples houses the Tlatsini\* Indigenous program, a direct service to youth admitted to the Maples, as well as to the Maples' staff, providing culturally safe services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, families, caregivers and communities.

All youth who stay at the Maples – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – have access to an Indigenous cultural coordinator, an Indigenous awareness worker and a Knowledge Keeper to work with and support them. The Representative sees the culturally safe services provided at the Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre as a bright spot.

[\*Tlatsini is a Tlingit word pronounced "Klatseenee" that was gifted to the Maples for Indigenous programming and means "The Place We Gather Strength."]

#### **L, KI, L (L,TH,KEEL) Child and Youth Mental Health Program**

The L,KI,L program offered by Hulitan Family and Community Services Society in Victoria provides support to Indigenous children and youth and their families, helping to improve their mental health and overall well-being.

The program is holistic in its approach, incorporating both cultural and mainstream interventions. The program embraces teachings of the medicine wheel in addressing the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs of children, youth and their families.



## Indigenous Research Methodology Framework

One of the responsibilities of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations team is to advance RCY's research approaches to be more inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The integration and implementation of Indigenous research methodologies are being woven into the organization's various service streams.

In the current fiscal year, FNMIR is supporting a cross-program team in the development and implementation of an RCY Indigenous Research Methodology Framework. It is envisioned that the process will embody the 6R's previously described and the principles of the Circle process as expressed in the [Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework in British Columbia](#) guide. The Circle speaks to the vital importance of strengthening relationships through sharing, collaborating and striving for consensus in collective decision-making; sharing of and respect for diverse perspectives and needs in a place where equality exists and healing can occur; and interconnectedness and interdependent relationships with one another where respect for diversity may be found.

The RCY Indigenous Research Methodology Framework is intended to be a useful reference for all teams, providing structure and support to further ground the organization's collective commitment to work from a decolonized position and to value Indigenous perspectives and voices in all work done at RCY.

## First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations Research

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations research is based on collaborative approaches to research including co-led research with other RCY teams and First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous partners and communities.

In 2020/21, FNMIR took the lead role in the creation of the report entitled *Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic*. The intent of the report was to be as responsive as possible knowing that children and youth with support needs and their families were experiencing significant issues with receiving services from MCFD as well as dealing with the suspension of in-class learning during the pandemic.

This report built on a solid foundation of advocacy that B.C. community organizations and families have been tirelessly engaged in for many years. RCY used virtual methods to bring together 12 community-based organizations over four consultations in the summer and fall of 2020. First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations also conducted a survey in November 2020, receiving responses from 545 families of children and youth with support needs, representing rural and urban families from each region of the province and including families of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children. The intention of the survey was to provide families with an opportunity to identify ongoing impacts of the pandemic and for the Representative to hear directly from families. FNMIR also talked to 10 families of children and youth with support needs from across B.C. about their personal circumstances and life in the pandemic.

### Fast Fact

According to the Ministry of Education, 77,232 B.C. students – 11.65 per cent of the K-to-12 student population – received a special needs designation in the 2019-20 school year.

(*Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic*, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)



### ROOTS

Currently, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations team is working on the development of a report advocating for the ROOTS program as a follow up to the investigative research undertaken in 2020/21 around the death of a First Nations youth by overdose on her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. The investigation found that the ROOTS program is a foundational step in helping Indigenous children in care reconnect with their ancestral roots. A strong ROOTS program can also support efforts of Indigenous communities to restore connections to their youth and move to self-determinacy in child welfare.

Created in 2003, the main objective of the ROOTS program is to ensure that Indigenous children in the care of MCFD have a culturally based plan that will work to connect, restore and preserve their identity with ties to their family, Indigenous community, heritage, culture, traditions and spiritualities.

A ROOTS practitioner may engage with Indigenous communities, create genograms to help find connections to the child's lost ties, create cultural care packages to identify a child's heritage, work with social workers to establish care plans that focus on establishing cultural connections and organize visits for the child to their Indigenous community.

### Fast Fact

"Aging out" is not a concept that fits with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous cultures. Indigenous organizations such as the First Nations Leadership Council, Métis Nation BC, the Delegated Aboriginal Agencies Directors' Forum and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres have been strong advocates for more robust and appropriate supports for their youth.

(A Parent's Duty, Representative for Children and Youth, December 2020)

### Indigenous Child Welfare Funding Project

A fundamental question in moving to implement the 2019 *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* is whether funding allocations are in alignment with current and evolving concepts around child welfare services. It is recognized that in shifting from a model of child welfare that is rooted in the concept of child protection (removing children from families and communities) to a child-/family-/community-centric model that places greater value on prevention measures, there may be a need for reconsideration of the financial structures and mechanisms currently in place.

To formulate a clear, evidence-based understanding of the current fiscal ecosystem and how it may be revised to better support evolving ways of perceiving child, family and community services, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations has commissioned a report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) to provide a comparative analysis of funding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth in care throughout the province.

This line of fiscal inquiry is the continuation, on an expanded scale, of a question previously explored by the Representative in the 2017 report "*Delegated Aboriginal Agencies: How resourcing affects service delivery*." That report concluded that inequitable and inconsistent funding (both provincial and federal) resulted in disparities of service delivery between MCFD's contracted agencies and DAAs. A 2016 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision also found that federal funding models were discriminatory against First Nations children living on-reserve. This further exploration is intended to inform First Nations and others as they move to resuming jurisdiction over child welfare services and take steps to implementing a model of prevention based on service provision.



## Behind the Scenes with RCY Staff – First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations

### Sheri

As Sheri enters her office, she is welcomed by imagery depicting drumming, ceremony, culture and history, intertwined to show the struggles and hopes of Indigenous peoples across Canada – reminding her of the significance of the work she does every day at RCY.



The poster, a depiction of the stained-glass piece titled *Giniigaaniimenaaning (Looking Ahead)* by Christi Belcourt, hangs in front of her as she works. The images help Sheri draw inspiration and motivation as a Research Officer on RCY's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations team.

*"It's a really powerful series of images," says Sheri. "At the bottom of the piece is an illustration of the ancestors facing each other smoking pipes, surrounded by the stars in the night sky. This represents a time before residential schools, a time and space when Indigenous people were living on Turtle Island in good relation with each other. It represents a beautiful way of life, one which we're not trying to change but one we are trying to return to."*

*Giniigaaniimenaaning* represents hope, change and reconciliation for the future, things Sheri believes RCY can contribute toward to help improve the lives of Indigenous children.

*"This Office has a unique opportunity and voice that can influence policy-makers and legislation, as well as support legislative changes that are currently happening," Sheri says. "The landscape of Indigenous child welfare is one that is shifting and evolving right now. It is a really important time for resumption of jurisdiction and our Office can help support Indigenous communities through that process."*

Although Sheri has only been with RCY for a short time, having joined in March 2021, she brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience from her 13 years working as a Research Consultant with the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's Indian Residential Schools research unit. Her work with RCY requires her to use that experience to review, research and develop a better understanding about the underlying issue of intergenerational trauma that impacts the well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth and young adults who receive government services.

She adds that being able to work alongside many like-minded individuals was a contributing factor as to why she wanted to join RCY.



*"What inspires me about working here is the tremendous potential for change, not just at RCY but society as a whole," Sheri says. "I feel that I am surrounded by people who I would characterize as 'change makers', people who really care about the work that they do and are informed on many different social justice issues. People who want to use their voice to make things better. How could someone not want to be a part of that?"*

When she's not working, Sheri loves to spend her free time in nature or kayaking out on the ocean. She currently resides on the shores of the Salish Sea – in unsundered Coast Salish territory of the Snaw-naw-as and Snuneymuxw Nations.



## Communications

The RCY Communications team provides a variety of supports to the Representative and the entire Office by handling both external and internal communications.

A key function of the Communications team is to help build awareness about the work of the Office throughout B.C. This includes responding to requests from journalists, organizing report releases and media events. The team keeps the RCY Executive informed about current topics and concerns in the media and government and provides strategic advice to the Representative and Executive on communications-related matters.

The Communications team is involved in the development of reports from the initial planning stages through to the development of recommendations, design, graphics and the post-release process, as well as writing and reviewing all public and background materials and organizing special events such as open houses that take place around the province.

The Representative is committed to speaking up in support of children and youth and receives many invitations each year to speak at functions and engagements. The Communications team supports these activities by preparing speeches, visual presentations and background materials.

Communications staff also prepare materials for the Representative's appearances before government committees, including the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth and the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. During fiscal 2020/21, the Representative made virtual presentations to these committees seven times.

As part of the Representative's commitment to building awareness about the work of the Office, especially among young people, the Communications team maintains a social media presence on six social media accounts, with assistance from a Social Media Youth Team to advise on and create youth-friendly content. (See page 76 for more on the Social Media Youth Team).

The Communications team also maintains the RCY website, which, in 2020/21, received over five million hits.

Internally, Communications keeps RCY staff throughout the province informed of key decisions and activities through a weekly staff newsletter, the *RCY Update*, and in between issues, keeps staff informed of any internal Office developments.

Communications is also responsible for organizing staff awareness days, such as Pink Shirt Day and Orange Shirt Day.





# YEAR IN REVIEW

1,725

Advocacy calls



15

Statements

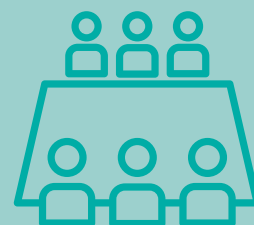


22

Report  
recommendations

5

Videos  
released



7

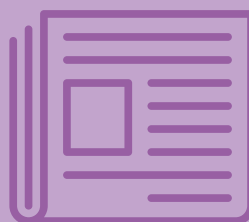
Appearances  
before  
Legislature  
Committees

9

Reports

118

Media  
requests



135

#CovidandKidsBC  
campaign posts



58

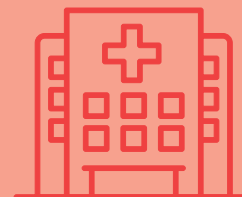
Advocacy  
outreach events

5,303,578

Website hits

4,524

Injury and death  
reports received





## Youth and Community Engagement

Essential to the work of the Representative is outreach to and engagement with children, youth, young adults and their families, communities and community organizations and other partners to:

- raise awareness of services provided by the Representative's Office
- provide education about the rights of children and youth
- establish connections within communities and organizations to enhance awareness of child rights and to facilitate the development of community-based advocacy services and supports
- hear directly from children, youth, young adults and those who support them about the important issues affecting them, what can be done to address those issues and improve the system of supports and services that serves them.

Ensuring that youth voices are heard and considered is a priority of the Representative. RCY strives to create opportunities to hear directly from youth about their issues and to involve them in working toward solutions. Positive youth engagement provides the Office with valuable youth perspectives and improved understanding of youth needs and concerns. These inform the activities and recommendations of the Office.

The Office also engages directly with community organizations and service providers in undertaking its work to hear from them directly and be informed by their lived expertise and experience.

### Highlights of Youth and Community Engagement Activities in 2020/21

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on RCY direct outreach and engagement activities during the 2020/21 year, with child rights clinics and workshops, RCY information-sharing sessions, and appearances at community events, conferences, presentations and speaking engagements strictly curtailed due to health and safety restrictions.

Within a few months, however, the Office implemented a number of remote and virtual routes and means to continue to reach out and connect with children, youth, young people, their families and communities.

This included:

- extensive use of technology such as Zoom, Miro Boards and livestream releases of reports
- the launch of chat and text functions providing children, youth and young adults with additional youth-friendly ways to connect with RCY Advocates
- distributing information to youth on supports through community partners
- the launch of the social media #CovidandKidsBC campaign
- online extensive engagement with youth on their participation in involuntary detentions (*Detained* report) and for an upcoming report on child participation in family law and child protection proceedings



- online consultations with
  - community partners in preparation of the collaborative report, *Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic*
  - advisory circles on supports for youth with FASD
  - Circle of Advisors for the investigative report on a First Nations youth.

The Appendix on page 98 contains a list of youth and community engagement, outreach and communications activities in which the Representative and her staff participated during 2020/21.

The graphic on page 75 shows the province-wide outreach the Office conducted in 2020/21.



*Perceptions board filled out by a youth for Without a Map report*

### BRIGHT SPOT

#### Partnership with InWithForward: Youth Engagement in Research

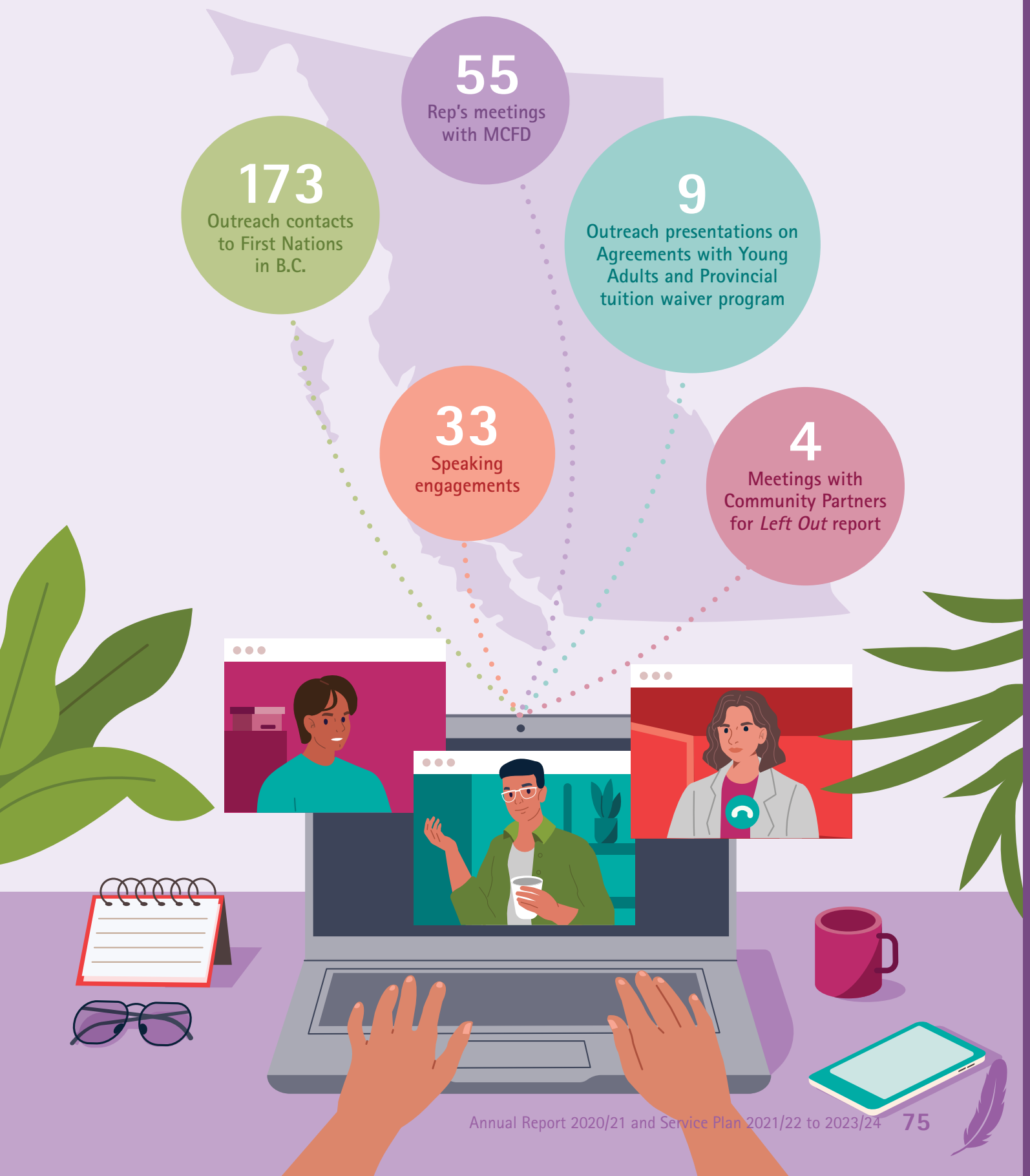
In order to learn more about young people's experiences within family law and child protection legal proceedings, RCY partnered with InWithForward, a B.C. organization that focuses on rich social research. InWithForward is guided by a methodological framework that requires deep, personal connection with participants, an attunement to subjective experiences and the threads that connect them, and an emphasis on narration and storytelling. This approach allowed InWithForward to amplify powerful personal stories while also drawing out important themes in the lives of children and youth who have travelled through the family justice and/or child protection systems.

While the research approach was heavily modified to meet the safety constraints of COVID-19, the research team was successful in engaging and building rapport with the youth they met across remote platforms. Through InWithForward, young people shared their experiences with the family justice and child protection systems and the learnings from these experiences will inform the development of recommendations for a planned RCY report on child participation in family law and child protection legal proceedings.

InWithForward also offered a "playback session" with all RCY staff to share the broader learnings garnered through the research. RCY staff greatly appreciated the interactive learning session and the opportunity to gain from the wisdom and insights provided by the youth researchers.



# OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT



# SOCIAL MEDIA YOUTH TEAM

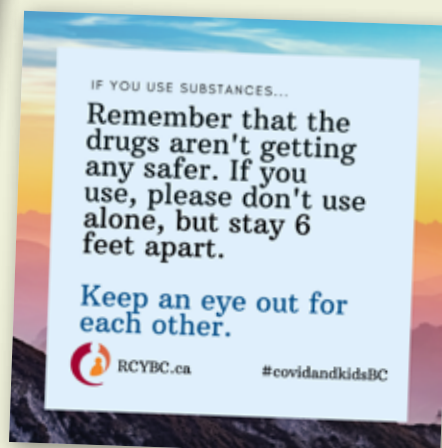
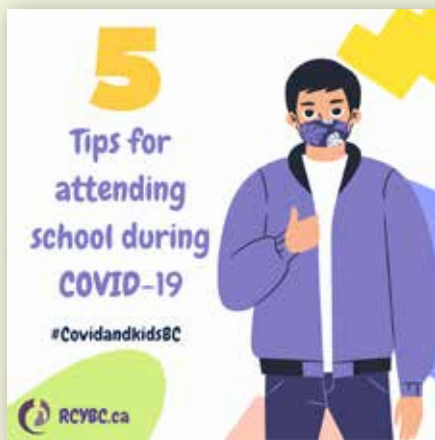
As part of the Representative's youth engagement, the Office employs a Social Media Youth Team to advise on and create youth-friendly content for the Representative's social media channels. This team is the first of its kind among child advocate offices in Canada and has been part of RCY's youth engagement and communications function since 2015.

The 2020/21 year has been unique in that the COVID-19 pandemic required staff to work remotely. Youth team members, as a result, also worked remotely and concentrated their efforts on assisting young people with coping with the restrictions brought on by the pandemic. The team conceptualized and created an extensive year-long #COVIDandKidsBC campaign, which was shared with partners throughout the province. This campaign dealt with topics such as physical distancing, social isolation, boredom, online bullying, harm reduction, LGBTQ2S+ issues, transitioning out of care during the pandemic, provincial supports for youth in care, how to hang out with friends virtually, apps, and back to school.

The team created graphics, photographs and videos, including claymation videos which were widely shared around the province.







The background is a solid dark magenta color. It is decorated with several stylized, lighter magenta feathers and hands. The hands are positioned as if they are reaching towards the center, with fingers slightly spread. The feathers are scattered around the hands, some pointing towards the center and others away from it. The overall composition is symmetrical and balanced.

# LOOKING AHEAD

# LOOKING AHEAD: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## The Representative's Strategic Plan

The Representative's Strategic Plan, first developed and implemented in 2017/18, serves as the foundation to an expansive planning cycle for the Office.

The Strategic Plan articulates the vision, mission, goals and key strategies of the Office. To support implementation of the Strategic Plan, each program area develops work plans – collectively referred to as the RCY Operational Plan – with activities and responsibilities identified for a three-year period.

The Representative's Strategic Plan is a living document that may be revised during the course of a fiscal year and is comprehensively reviewed and revised on an annual basis based on data and feedback and in response to emerging issues.

## Key Strategies – Underway to 2023/24

Described below and arising from the 2020/21 planning cycle is an illustrative list of several of the key strategies and activities, by goal, to be undertaken by RCY in the next period. It is recognized that some of these strategies will be impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and will be subject to adjustment in the 2021/22 planning review as well as in response to emerging issues.

**GOAL:** *RCY helps to improve services to children, youth and young adults who are in receipt of, or eligible for, designated or reviewable services*

Several of the strategies and activities associated with this goal include:

- undertake comprehensive reviews and produce public reports on government's progress in implementing relevant recommendations from previous RCY reports and in fulfilling government's commitments to improving specific designated services. The priority service areas for comprehensive review of progress over the next three years will involve separate reports on:
  - mental health services for children and youth
  - addictions services for youth
  - services for children and youth with support needs
  - support services for young adults who have transitioned out of care or from youth agreements
- commission research reviews and publicly report on a range of issues related to mental health services for children and youth, including the prevalence of evidence-based mental health services for children and youth with support needs, children in care, Indigenous children and youth with concurrent disorders





- continue implementation of the expanded advocacy mandate in relation to 19- to 23-year-old young adults who are eligible for Agreements with Young Adults and/or the provincial tuition waiver program, including proactive engagement and outreach to enhance awareness of the expanded mandate
- implement the proposed further expansion of the Advocacy and Monitoring mandates in relation to 19- to 26-year-old young adults who were formerly in care when amendments to the *RCY Act* are enacted
- release public reports on the results of the multi-year qualitative and quantitative review of care planning and cultural planning for children and youth in care in 2021/22
- continue to monitor and assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth – and on service delivery – in areas of particular vulnerability, including children and youth with support needs, child and youth mental health, youth who have aged out of care and domestic violence
- conduct a review of early years services and supports that better enable children and families to be supported and kept safely together, producing a public report in 2021/22, and including release of a series of related research reports
- conduct a review of steps taken by MCFD to improve and reform its system of residential care services, including topic-specific matters of interest and priority that emerge from the Representative's internal data analyses
- conduct an aggregate review and report on girls with highly complex needs and strategies and services to better address those needs.

### **GOAL:** *RCY champions the rights of children, youth and young adults*

Some of the strategies and activities associated with this goal include:

- continue analyzing, publicly commenting on and, as necessary, monitoring the implementation of proposals to amend the *Mental Health Act* to bring into effect short-term hospital stabilization care for youth who have overdosed
- carry out research into child participation and inclusion of the voices of youth, including through legal representation, in child protection and high-conflict family law cases, producing a report with recommendations in 2021/22
- commission a research review and produce a public report, with recommendations, on the needs of and services for gender-minority youth in 2022, to be followed by a separate and similar report on the needs of and services for sexual minority youth
- ensure the rights of children, youth and young adults consistently inform the planning, conduct and content of RCY investigations and aggregate reviews, monitoring and special reports
- explore opportunities for joint projects with the new Office of the Human Rights Commissioner
- seek amendment to the *RCY Act* to reference the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.



**GOAL:** *RCY identifies and promotes awareness of the legislation, policies and practices that result in the over-involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth, and their families and communities, and promotes changes, services and supports that will address and reduce that over-involvement*

Some of the strategies and activities associated with this goal include:

- commission a comprehensive review of and publicly report on provincial and federal funding of Indigenous child welfare services with a view to identifying gaps and inequities in funding and measures that need to be taken to address those gaps and inequities
- assess and publicly report on progress made by public bodies responsible for the provision of designated and reviewable services, or other appropriate public bodies, in the implementation of recommendations arising from previous inquiries and reviews – such as *Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification – From Root Causes to Root Solutions* (MCFD Special Advisor report), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, and the report from the Murdered and Missing Women and Girls Inquiry – and which are reasonably connected to the improvement of designated services and supports for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, youth and young adults, and their families and communities
- conduct a review of the implementation and utilization of ROOTS programs that assist First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children in care to reconnect or preserve their ties to Indigenous family, extended family, community and culture
- conduct a review of the implementation of Jordan's Principle.

**GOAL:** *RCY identifies, understands and addresses issues of systemic racism and structural barriers that impact the lives of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families served*

One over-arching strategy is to:

- ensure, where applicable, that the contemporary circumstances of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families – and services to those populations – are appropriately contextualized in RCY reports and communications within the legacy of colonial and systemic racist policies and practices.



### **GOAL:** *RCY supports First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in reassuming jurisdiction over child and family services*

Two key strategies are to:

- assess and publicly report on progress made by public bodies responsible for the provision of designated child and family services in the implementation of changes to provincial and federal legislation that are intended to facilitate the resumption of jurisdiction, responsibility or engagement of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous communities in child and family services, including the degree of assistance and support provided to facilitate that process
- retain legal counsel with specialized expertise in Indigenous child welfare legislation and services to provide staff training and expert advice on systemic issues as well as individual cases.

### **GOAL:** *Children, youth and young adults are engaged in informing the work of RCY*

The Representative is committed to hearing the lived experiences of children and youth and engaging them in meaningful and effective ways in the work of the Office.

Strategies to accomplish this goal include:

- develop and implement a targeted youth and community engagement strategy that supports the engagement of children, youth, young adults and communities across all areas of work, and retain a Youth Engagement Advisor to support the implementation of that strategy
- include the consideration of engagement of children, youth and/or young adults with lived experience in the planning for every project or report and, where appropriate, implement that engagement
- include the voices of children, youth and young adults with lived experience in RCY reports when appropriate
- continue to employ and support RCY Social Media Youth Team members to provide advice on how best to use social media to support youth outreach efforts and create original content for sharing via the Representative's social media accounts.

### **GOAL:** *RCY is on a journey to become a culturally safer organization for staff and people served*

RCY is committed to enhancing its understanding of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous worldviews, cultures, customs and the effects of colonial practices.

Some of the ways this will be accomplished include:

- develop a human resources strategy, aligned with the Public Service Agency Diversity and Action Plan, that supports the recruitment and retention of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous staff
- incorporate Indigenous research methodologies into RCY's research and reviews



- retain a Knowledge Keeper and associated roster of Elders and Matriarchs to advise and inform on all aspects of RCY 's work
- foster and maintain a working environment that is welcoming and supportive to First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous staff and people served
- continue RCY staff training in relation to cultural safety, anti-racism, trauma-informed awareness and restorative approaches to resolving conflict
- engage in a process of reconciliation with the Nations on whose territories RCY offices are located
- build internal individual and organizational capacity within all program areas of RCY to work with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families in ways that are respectful and informed by Indigenist worldviews.

**GOAL:** *RCY works with integrity in an informed, effective and collaborative manner*

Continuous improvement is an important value for the Representative and the Office has identified a number of strategies to improve its internal operations, including more effective use of our data and collaborative practices.

In the coming years, the Office will:

- continue establishing and maintaining regular linkages and partnerships with universities, colleges and other external research bodies
- continue the implementation of new processes for the development of recommendations made by the Representative, and for the monitoring and public reporting on the progress made by public bodies in implementing those recommendations, and assess and refine those processes as necessary
- develop and fully implement an ongoing process for the identification of systemic issues and the strategies to address those issues
- rationalize and regularize external advisory processes
- continue to expand the utilization of other modalities of influence, in addition to public reports, for influencing positive systems change
- implement a balanced approach to systems change that includes highlighting and promoting existing system strengths and promising practices
- improve how RCY collects and uses quantitative and qualitative data from all program areas to better enable the identification of systemic issues and to better inform current and future priority initiatives, including the development of a data warehouse
- develop and implement an RCY management and leadership training program.



### GOAL: *RCY develops and implements new ways of carrying out the work of RCY*

Every organization should continuously improve its business processes. Some strategies in this regard include to:

- periodically assess and adapt recently implemented flexible work options for RCY staff, including full-time work from home and decentralization of previous Victoria-based positions
- extend the reach and understanding of RCY research and reports by developing and applying targeted knowledge translation (or mobilization) strategies and activities for each RCY report
- acquire and implement technological tools to better facilitate communication, collaboration and consultation amongst RCY staff, and with external agencies, service providers, and partners
- acquire and implement new technological tools to better inform and engage children, youth and young adults
- review and identify revisions to RCY performance measures for consideration by the SSCCY
- collaborate with other independent officers of the Legislature to identify efficiencies in the areas of human resources, financial processes and information technology.

### Legislation Changes and Review

In 2017/18, the SSCCY undertook its required statutory review of the *RCY Act*. In its report on the review, the SSCCY made a number of recommendations for change, however, most of those recommended changes have not been brought forward by government.

The changes that have been made or are expected include:

- on July 3, 2019, changes to the *Representative for Children and Youth Regulation* were brought into force to expand the advocacy jurisdiction of RCY to include young adults ages 19- to 23-years-old (inclusive) who are eligible for Agreements with Young Adults and/or the tuition waiver program
- that same Regulation change also included clarification of RCY's jurisdiction in relation to services for children and youth with support needs administered by the Ministry of Children and Family Development
- amendments to the *RCY Act* recommended by the SSCCY to further expand RCY's advocacy jurisdiction to broaden the age range of young adults formerly in care and youth and young adults with support needs to include those up to their 27<sup>th</sup> birthday are expected in 2021/22.

The next five-year statutory review by the SSCCY must be commenced by March 31, 2022. RCY will be developing a comprehensive submission bringing forward proposed changes previously recommended by the SSCCY as well as a number of other proposed changes.



# WHAT'S COMING UP?

Look for these and more projects now underway...

## Girls and Complexity

Working with external researchers to ensure a deep understanding of the complex challenges that some girls experience, RCY will be compiling an aggregate report on a concerning trend: a significant number of girls – many of them First Nations, Métis, Inuit or Urban Indigenous – experiencing mental health and substance use concerns, housing instability, sexual exploitation and disconnection from family, school and culture. The report will identify risks and opportunities for intervention.

## The Early Years

In 2021/22, RCY will be completing the scoping phase for a multi-pronged initiative examining the early years. The initiative will focus on preventive approaches and will look at what is and is not working currently and what a transformed system that ensures children thrive could look like. It will incorporate projects that emphasize the imperative of supporting families and communities to nurture young children, particularly those families that experience increased vulnerability. It will also examine systems, programs and services that are necessary in the early years with a focus on bright spots where creative and innovative approaches are already in action.

## Indigenous Child Welfare Funding

Through a partnership with the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD), RCY's FNMIR team is examining whether funding allocations for child welfare align with current ideas around keeping families and communities together. This research will consider how the financial structures currently in place may need to be re-imagined to better support evolving ideas of child, family and community services. IFSD will provide a comparative analysis of funding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth in care in B.C. at both the provincial and federal levels.

## Data Quality and Disaggregation

In 2021/22, RCY will be developing a robust data strategy that builds RCY's own internal data capacity, and also increases the organization's capability of accessing external data and research that provides additional context and meaning. The data strategy will incorporate an RCY-wide commitment to the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP), and to a consistent ethical approach that can apply across all RCY's data and research work.

## Centring Child Voice

In fall 2021, the Reviews and Investigations team will produce a report focused on child and youth participation in child protection and family law legal processes. By engaging young people, RCY will explore opportunities for children to participate in *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and/or *Family Law Act* legal processes in meaningful and inclusive ways.



The background is a solid dark green color. Scattered across it are several stylized, light green elements. There are four hands, each with fingers spread, appearing to reach out from the corners and sides. Interspersed among the hands are numerous feathers of various sizes and orientations, some pointing towards the center and others away from it. The overall composition is symmetrical and balanced.

**PERFORMANCE**



# PERFORMANCE

The Office measures its performance in achieving its outcomes of relevance, responsiveness, accountability and excellence by tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) and associated performance targets. In addition to KPIs, the Office also tracks a number of secondary indicators for each outcome.

## Measuring Performance

The Representative's Office measures its performance in meeting its mandate and achieving its vision and goals through assessing the following outcomes:

- **Relevance** – means that the Office:
  - addresses issues and areas of concern within its mandate and of interest to the Legislature and the public
  - is aware of and reacts readily and appropriately to issues brought to its attention through its monitoring and review and investigation activities, its liaison and collaboration with public bodies and by legislators, community partners and the public
  - produces reports that are useful to, accessible and understood by the public, partners and Legislature
  - makes recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of designated programs and reviewable services with the goal of improving the child- and youth-serving system.
- **Responsiveness** – means that the Office:
  - addresses requests from children, youth, young adults and their families for support, assistance, information and advice in a timely and sensitive way
  - analyzes and takes timely and appropriate action in relation to reported critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services
  - reaches out to children, youth, young adults and their families, the child- and youth-serving system and communities to build awareness of the rights of children, youth and young adults and the services of the Office.
- **Accountability** – means that the Office:
  - reports regularly and in an open and transparent way about its activities to the Legislature and British Columbians
  - provides information on its plans, activities and performance to the SSCCY for review and scrutiny.
- **Excellence** – means that the Office meets high standards of professional and corporate conduct through:
  - a competent, ethical and diverse staff
  - rigorous application and compliance with established requirements in all its operations.



## Relevance

The Representative's Office ensures relevance in meeting its oversight and accountability role by addressing areas of concern within its mandate that are of interest and importance to the Legislature and public. This is measured by the extent to which the work of the Office responds to concerns or matters brought to the attention of the Representative through the Office's oversight activities and liaison and collaboration with public bodies and other partners, illustrating that the Representative is alert to issues, is in touch with the system and partners and reacts accordingly.

Key Performance Indicator:	2020/21 target	2020/21 results	2021/22 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of the work of the Office, as reflected in public reports, papers, submissions and statements of position, that was in response to a concern or matter arising from an external source or stakeholder</li> </ul>	50%	60%	50%

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2020/21 Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public accountability for the review and investigations of critical injuries and deaths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>preparation and production of public information outlining the number of reports received, reviews undertaken and cases identified for investigation by the Representative</li> </ul>	RCY reports annually on the number of reports received, reviews undertaken and cases identified for investigation in its <i>Annual Report and Service Plan</i> .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ongoing monitoring and tracking of action taken on recommendations made to public bodies by the Representative on improvements and enhancements to child- and youth-serving services and programs</li> </ul>	In 2018/19, RCY streamlined its process for tracking recommendations made in reports. The Office reports publicly on its website on the progress made toward the implementation of recommendations. A review is currently underway in consultation with public bodies to make adjustments to the process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevance to the public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitoring interest in the work of the Office by tracking the number of times information and resources on the Representative's website are viewed by the public</li> </ul>	In 2020/21, the Representative's website received 5,303,578 hits. In total, 69,515 users accessed 1,262,310 pages on the site.



## Responsiveness

Timely and effective response to requests for assistance and support from vulnerable children, youth, young adults and their families, as well as timely and effective reviews and investigations of incidents of critical injury or death are essential for the Representative to meet her mandate.

Key Performance Indicator:	2020/21 target	2020/21 results	2021/22 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of adult callers requesting advocacy services the Office responds to within the established three-day response timeline</li> </ul>	100%	96%*	100%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of screening and review of reports of child and youth critical injuries or deaths that are completed by the Office within the established two-month timeframe</li> </ul>	100%	100%	100%

\*99 per cent of adult callers are responded to within five days.

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2020/21 Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsiveness to advocacy requests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the percentage of youth requests for service responded to within 24 hours. The goal is to ensure that all youth in contact with the Office receive an initial response to their request for service within this period</li> </ul>	In 2020/21, more than 96 per cent** of youth contacting the Advocacy team were called back within 24 hours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tracking the number of appearances or presentations by Office staff at stakeholder and community events, the number of community relations and engagement activities and the number of communities visited with the goal of ensuring that the Representative is engaging and reaching out to children, youth, young adults and their families and partners across the province</li> </ul>	In 2020/21, the Representative and staff participated in 331 community engagement activities. This included participation in events, conferences, workshops, meetings and speaking engagements. The Appendix includes a list of outreach and community engagement activities undertaken by the Representative and staff in 2020/21.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of interactions and engagement activities with youth to raise awareness about their rights and the services of the Office. The goal is to steadily increase the awareness of youth and young adults through increased events and interactions</li> </ul>	In 2020/21, the Representative and staff directly engaged with 127 youth and young adults through such activities as attending community events, hosting information booths and facilitating child and youth rights workshops.***



## PERFORMANCE

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2020/21 Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of collaborative efforts or initiatives with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous communities and organizations on mutually identified issues of shared concern</li> </ul>	In 2020/21, the Representative and staff met with 20 First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous organizations and participated in 153 Indigenous events, conferences and speaking engagements.

\*\*99 per cent of youth are responded to within three days and 100 per cent within five days.

\*\*\*This number is significantly lower than past years as a result of the cancellation due to the pandemic of a number of major in-person outreach events and conferences hosted by and for youth. RCY held several webinars in lieu of in-person outreach events and conferences.



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## Accountability

A key outcome for the Representative is to be accountable to the Legislature and British Columbians for the work of her Office. A broad measure of how the Representative demonstrates her accountability is through the public release of reports and papers (including periodic reports on child injuries and death reviews and investigations) and comments and statements about the findings of her work.

Key Performance Indicator:	2020/21 target	2020/21 results	2021/22 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of reports and papers publicly released and the number of public comments and statements made by the Representative</li> </ul>	10 reports and statements	24 reports and statements	10 reports and statements

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2020/21 Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting on activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of times the Representative makes presentations to the SSCCY and SSCFGS</li> </ul>	<p>In 2020/21, the Representative appeared (via Zoom) before the SSCCY five times: on April 29, 2020 to present on her COVID-19 statement and discuss the Substance Use report; on Sept. 17, 2021, to provide a general update and to discuss the <i>Invisible Children</i> report; on Jan. 13, 2021, for an introduction meeting with the newly appointed SSCCY; on Feb. 4, 2021, to discuss the Representative's <i>Annual Report 2019/20 and Service Plan 2020/21 to 2022/23</i>, the <i>Illuminating Service Experience</i> report and the <i>Detained</i> report; and on Feb. 5, 2021 to discuss the reports <i>Left Out</i> and <i>A Parent's Duty</i>.</p> <p>The Representative appeared before the SSCFGS (via Zoom) two times on April 29, 2020 and Feb. 2, 2021.</p>



## Excellence

Excellence in service delivery is achieved and maintained through competent and skilled staff. A key indicator of the Office's achievement of excellence is the extent to which staff undertake ongoing professional development to ensure that they stay current and up to date on emerging issues and trends, expand their knowledge and skills base and promote their own personal development.

Key Performance Indicator:	2020/21 target	2020/21 results	2021/22 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of full-time and part-time staff who participate in ongoing professional development</li> </ul>	95%	94%*	95%

\*The COVID-19 pandemic limited some staff training opportunities. In other cases, staff participated in less formal training and professional development opportunities that did not have formal registration requirements.

Staff participated in learning sessions offered both externally, through the BC Public Service Agency, and internally through specific organizationally arranged sessions and by RCY employees sharing their knowledge and expertise. Examples include: Complexity; Cultural Safety; Trauma and Resistance; Government Budgeting Fundamentals; House of Indigenous Learning – Allyship 101: Standing in Solidarity; Fundamentals of OCAP; Microsoft Teams Training; Emotional Intelligence, Diversity and Inclusion Essentials; Building Cultural Safety and Humility Skills; Gender-based Analysis; Business Case Planning; Discovering (or Recovering) Creativity; Guided Meditation, Cultivating Compassion; Occupational Safety and Health Committee Training; Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Workplace; Project Management; Ethics for Everyone.

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2020/21 Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff contribution to meeting mandate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the degree to which staff are engaged in their work and perceive that they contribute to the achievement of the Office's mandate</li> </ul>	Staff continue to be actively engaged in supporting a positive and effective workplace culture through various collaborative working groups and communities of practice. The Social and Wellness Committee continues to meet monthly, hosts opportunities for connection, and circulates a wellness and learning focused monthly newsletter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health, safety and well-being of staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Office addresses any health and safety matters immediately and effectively in compliance with occupational health and safety laws and meets the needs of staff. Ongoing support for activities and programs to support staff well-being is provided</li> </ul>	In this reporting period, the OHS Committee was focused on supporting RCY Executive with the workplace response to the pandemic. This included providing recommendations for compliance with guidance from the Provincial Health Officer, the BC Public Service Agency and WorkSafe BC, creating, implementing and monitoring COVID-19 Safety Protocols for workplaces and remote work guidance.



Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2020/21 Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing compliance with core policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office policies and procedures adhere to applicable core government policies, standards and practices and the Office meets budgeting and audit standards and requirements</li> </ul>	<p>The accounts of the Office of the Representative are audited at least once a year as part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund audit.</p>



Artwork by JR for Without a Map report





The background is a solid teal color. It is decorated with several stylized, lighter teal feathers and hands. The hands are positioned as if they are reaching up or down towards the center, with fingers spread. The feathers are scattered throughout the composition, some pointing upwards and others downwards. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

# **BUDGET & EXPENDITURES**

# BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

The Office is funded by the Legislative Assembly through a voted appropriation. The vote provides separately for operating expenses and capital acquisitions. Any unused appropriation cannot be carried forward for use in subsequent fiscal years.

The budget shown in the tables below is based on budgeted expenses approved by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (*Annual Review of the Budgets of Statutory Offices* – December 2019). The following tables and graphs compare the voted appropriation to total operating and capital expenditures for fiscal year 2020/21.

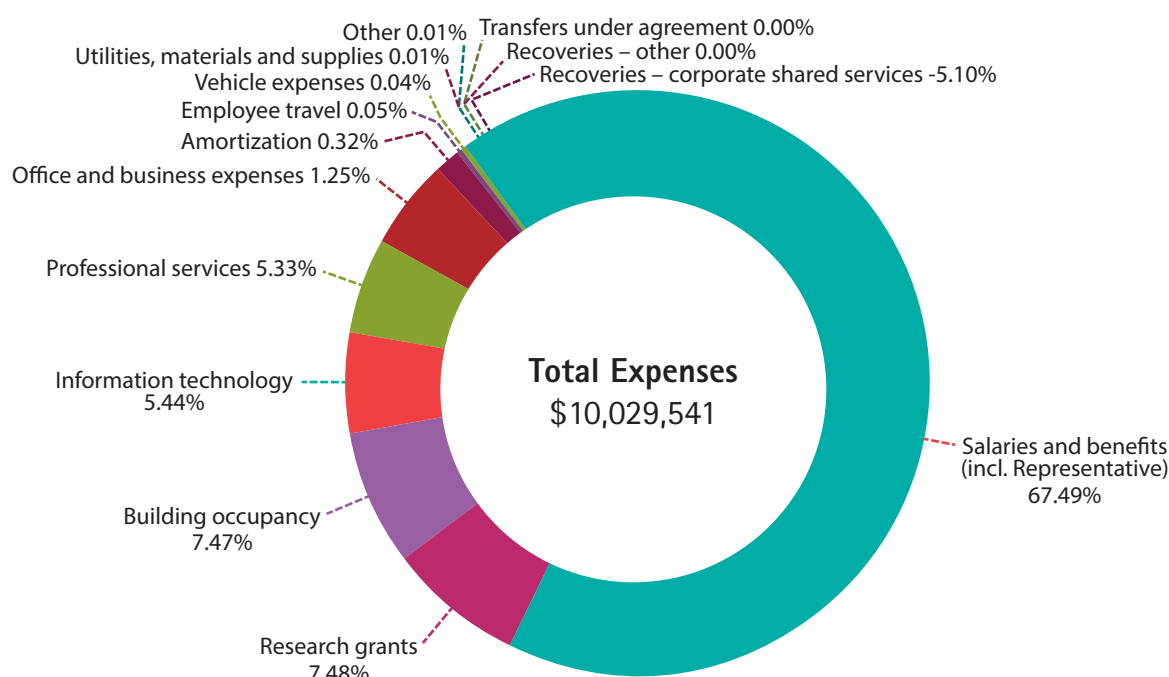
## Actual Expenditure and Budget – 2020/21

Operating Expense Type	Budget	Actual
Salaries and benefits (incl. Representative)	8,174,000	7,537,865
Employee travel	345,000	5,101
Professional services	332,000	595,784
Information technology	628,000	607,478
Office and business expenses	447,000	139,533
Utilities, materials and supplies	7,000	1,058
Vehicle expenses	8,000	4,745
Amortization	55,000	36,139
Building occupancy	1,019,000	834,634
Research grants	5,000	835,423
Transfers under agreement	5,000	450
Recoveries – corporate shared services	(553,000)	(569,506)
Recoveries – other	(2,000)	–
Other	1,000	837
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>10,471,000</b>	<b>10,029,541</b>

Capital Expense Type	Budget	Actual
Information technology	45,000	19,558
Office furniture and equipment	5,000	–
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>19,558</b>



## Actual Expenditures by Expense Type – 2020/21



## Looking to the Future – Approved and Planned Budget for 2021/22 to 2023/24

The table below illustrates operating and capital budgets approved for 2021/22 and planned for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Operating	Note	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Salaries and benefits	1	8,669,000	8,501,000	8,501,000
Employee travel	2	345,000	345,000	345,000
Professional services	3	402,000	402,000	402,000
Information technology	4	627,000	612,000	612,000
Office and business expenses	5	436,000	426,000	426,000
Utilities, materials and supplies	6	5,000	5,000	5,000
Vehicle expenses	7	8,000	8,000	8,000
Amortization	8	55,000	55,000	55,000
Building occupancy	9	797,000	797,000	797,000
Research grants	10	5,000	5,000	5,000
Transfers under agreement	11	5,000	5,000	5,000
Other expenses	12	1,000	1,000	1,000
Recoveries	13	(714,000)	(513,000)	(513,000)
<b>Total Operating</b>		<b>10,641,000</b>	<b>10,649,000</b>	<b>10,649,000</b>



Capital Expense Type	Note	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Information technology	14	45,000	45,000	45,000
Office furniture and equipment	15	5,000	5,000	5,000
<b>Total Capital</b>		<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>

Note 1 Base salaries, supplementary salaries (first aid allowance, maternity / parental leave, auxiliary health & welfare, etc.) and benefits (including relocation) for all regular and auxiliary staff including the Representative.

Note 2 Employee travel includes costs for staff on official Office business, including prescribed allowances.

Note 3 Professional services include fees and expenses for professional services rendered directly to the Office for the provision of services in the delivery of programs, the provision of services required by statute or legislation and are billed directly to the Office, and the provision of services that will assist the development of policy and / or programs or improve / change the delivery of programs, such as management consulting services.

Note 4 Information technology (operating) includes all contract fees and costs related to data, voice, image and text processing operations and services, such as data and word processing, data communications, supplies, repairs, maintenance and short-term rentals of information processing equipment.

Note 5 Office and business expenses include supplies and services required for the operation of the Office.

Note 6 Utilities, materials and supplies include the cost of services such as the supply of water and electricity, materials and supplies required for normal operation of government services.

Note 7 Vehicle expenses include the costs associated with the repair and maintenance of Office vehicles.

Note 8 Amortization includes the amortization of the cost of capital assets and prepaid capital advances over their useful lives.

Note 9 Building occupancy includes payments for the rental and / or maintenance of office accommodation, including tenant improvements that do not meet the criteria for capitalization.

Note 10 Research grants include payments to individuals, businesses, non-profit associations and other entities which may include stipulations as to the use of the funds and which are not entitlements or shared cost arrangements.

Note 11 Transfers under agreement include payments made under the terms of a contract or agreement for which the Office does not receive any direct goods or services.

Note 12 Other expenses include expenses, such as financing costs, valuation allowances and other expenses which cannot be reasonably allocated to another category.

Note 13 Internal and external recoveries include the recovery of costs from other officers of the Legislature, ministries, participants and sponsoring organizations for activities described within the vote.

Note 14 Information technology (capital) includes the purchase or capital lease cost of mainframe and other systems hardware, software and related equipment.

Note 15 Office furniture and equipment includes the cost or capital lease cost of office furniture and equipment.



The background is a solid red color. It is decorated with several stylized, lighter red hands and feathers. The hands are positioned around the perimeter, with fingers spread, as if reaching towards the center. The feathers are scattered throughout the background, some pointing towards the center and others away from it. The overall composition is symmetrical and balanced.

# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX - LIST OF OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

## Events, Conferences and Speaking Engagements

Access to Justice BC and RCYBC Children & Youth Champions Event (March 2021)	COVID Outreach – Bonaparte Indian Band (August 2020)
Adoptive Families Association of BC – Stand Together Conference (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Boothroyd Indian Band (August 2020)
Archway Community Services RCY Information Session and Materials (October 2020)	COVID Outreach – Boston Bar First Nation (August 2020)
Aunt Leah's Place Supporting Children in Foster Care Event (February 2021)	COVID Outreach – Bridge River Indian Band (August 2020)
BC Aboriginal Child Care Society Annual Provincial Training Conference (September 2020)	COVID Outreach – Canim Lake Band (August 2020)
British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society Indigenous Disability and Wellness Gathering (November 2020)	COVID Outreach – Cariboo Friendship Society, Williams Lake (June 2020)
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres' Executive Directors Meeting Presentation (December 2020)	COVID Outreach – Chawathil First Nation (September 2020)
BC Child & Youth in Care Week Event (May 2020)	COVID Outreach – Cheam First Nation (September 2020)
Canadian Scholars Summer Presentation (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Coldwater Band (August 2020)
Collaborating for Resilient Democracy Forum (March 2021)	COVID Outreach – Conayt Friendship Society, Merritt (June 2020)
Community Partners Dialogue for <i>Left Out</i> Report (June, July, September and October 2020)	COVID Outreach – Cooks Ferry Indian Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – ?Akisq'nuk First Nation (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Cowichan Tribes (September 2020 and February 2021)
COVID Outreach – ?aąam Indian Band (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Dididaht First Nation (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Adams Lake Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre, Smithers (July 2020)
COVID Outreach – Ahousaht First Nation (June 2020)	COVID Outreach – Esk'eteme First Nation (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Aitchelitz First Nation (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Esquimalt Nation (September 2020 and February 2021)
COVID Outreach – Ashcroft Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Fort St John Friendship Society, – Fort St John (July 2020)
	COVID Outreach – Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Surrey (July 2020)





COVID Outreach – Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert, Prince Rupert (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Lower Similkameen Indian Band (July 2020)
COVID Outreach – Halalt First Nation (September 2020 and February 2021)	COVID Outreach – Lyackson First Nation (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Heiltsuk Nation (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Lytton First Nation – (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – High Bar First Nation (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Malahat Nation (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Hiiye'yu Lelum House of Friendship Society, Duncan (June 2020)	COVID Outreach – Matsqui First Nation (October 2020)
COVID Outreach – Huu-ay-aht First Nations (September 2020)	COVID Outreach – Mission Friendship Centre Society, Mission (July 2020)
COVID Outreach – Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society, Kamloops (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Musqueam Indian Band (January 2021)
COVID Outreach – Kanaka Bar Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Nawican Friendship Centre, Dawson Creek (July 2020)
COVID Outreach – Katzie First Nation (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Neskonlith Indian Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Kermode Friendship Society, Terrace (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Nicomen Indian Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, Kelowna (June 2020)	COVID Outreach – Nooaitch Indian Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – K'ómoks First Nation (February 2021)	COVID Outreach – North Okanagan Friendship Centre Society, Vernon (July 2020)
COVID Outreach – Ktunaxa Nation (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – N'Quatqua First Nation (January 2021)
COVID Outreach – Kwantlen First Nation (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Nuxalk Nation (January 2021)
COVID Outreach – Kwaw-kwaw-a-pilt First Nation (October 2020)	COVID Outreach – Okanagan Indian Band (July 2020)
COVID Outreach – Kwikwetlem First Nation (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Osoyoos Indian Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Leq'á:mel First Nation (October 2020)	COVID Outreach – Oonakane Friendship Centre, Penticton (June 2020)
COVID Outreach – Lillooet Friendship Centre Society, Lillooet (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Oregon Jack Creek Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Lil'wat Nation (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Pauquachin First Nation (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Little Shuswap Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Pekw'Xe:yles First Nation (October 2020)
COVID Outreach – Lower Kootenay – Yaqaan Nukiy Band (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Penelakut Tribe (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Lower Nicola Indian Band (August 2020)	



COVID Outreach – Penticton Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Skuppah Indian Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Peters First Nation (September 2020)	COVID Outreach – Skwah First Nation (October 2020)
COVID Outreach – Port Alberni Friendship Centre, Port Alberni (June 2020)	COVID Outreach – Snaw-naw-as Nanoose First Nation (February 2021)
COVID Outreach – Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Snuneymuxw First Nation (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Quesnel Tillicum Society/ Native Frienship Centre, Quesnel (July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Songhees Nation (September 2020 and February 2021)
COVID Outreach – Qualicum First Nation (September 2020)	COVID Outreach – Soowahlie First Nation (October 2020)
COVID Outreach – Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre Society, Port Hardy (June & July 2020)	COVID Outreach – Splatsin First Nation (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Samahquam Nation – (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Spuzzum First Nation (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Seabird Island Band (October 2020)	COVID Outreach – Sq'ewlets First Nation (October 2020)
COVID Outreach –shishalh (Sechelt) First Nation (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Squiala First Nation (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Sekw'el'was (Cayoose Creek Band) (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Sto:Lo Nation (September 2020)
COVID Outreach – Semiahmoo First Nation (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Sts'ailes Nation (January 2021)
COVID Outreach – Scia'new (Beecher Bay First Nation) ( June 2020 and February 2021)	COVID Outreach – Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Shackan Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Stz'uminus First Nation (September 2020 and January 2021)
COVID Outreach – Shxw'ow'hamel First Nation (October 2020)	COVID Outreach – Sumas First Nation (October 2020 and January 2021)
COVID Outreach – Shxwhà:y Village First Nation (September 2020)	COVID Outreach – Tansi Friendship Centre, Chetwynd (July 2020)
COVID Outreach – Simpcw First Nation (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – T'exelc – Williams Lake Indian Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Siska Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Nanaimo (June 2020)
COVID Outreach – Sq'ewá:lxw (Skawahlook First Nation) (October 2020)	COVID Outreach – T'it'q'et First Nation (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Skeetchestn Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Skowkale First Nation (October 2020)	COVID Outreach – Tla'amin Nation (January 2021)
	COVID Outreach – Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation (February 2021)



COVID Outreach – Tl'entinqox Government (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Wei Wai Kum First Nation (June 2020)
COVID Outreach – Tl'esqox – Toosey Indian Band (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Westbank First Nation (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Tobacco Plains Indian Band (July 20 & 31 2020)	COVID Outreach – Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Toquaht Nation (September 2020)	COVID Outreach – Xat'sūll First Nation (Soda Creek) (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Tsal'alh First Nation (August 2020)	COVID Outreach – Xaxli'p First Nation (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Tsartlip First Nation (September 2020)	COVID Outreach – Yakwekwioose First Nation (October 2020)
COVID Outreach – Tsawout First Nation (September 2020)	COVID Outreach – Yale First Nation (January 2021)
COVID Outreach – Tsawwassen First Nation (January 2021)	COVID Outreach – Yunesit'in Government (August 2020)
COVID Outreach – Tseshaht First Nation (February 2021)	Delegated Aboriginal Agency Partnership Forum Presentation (September 2020 and March 2021)
COVID Outreach – Tsideldel First Nation (Alexis Creek First Nation), (August 2020)	Denisiqi Services Society Introduction to the Adulting 101 Program (March 2021)
COVID Outreach – Tseil Waututh Nation (January 2021)	Denisiqi Services Society Outreach and Relationship Building Presentation (2021)
COVID Outreach – Tsilhqot'in Nation (February 2021)	Ending Violence Association of BC Annual Training Forum (March 2021)
COVID Outreach – Tzeachten First Nation (September 2020)	Family Support Institute Parent Support and Information Event (December 2020)
COVID Outreach – Uchucklesaht Tribe (February 2021)	Federation of Community Social Services of BC COVID-19 and Your Organization Webinar (May 2020)
COVID Outreach – Ucluelet First Nation (September 2020)	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks "March Fed Connects" Presentation (March 2021)
COVID Outreach – Ulkatcho First Nation (August 2020)	First Call BC: Child and Youth Advocacy Society 2021 Virtual Fundraising Gala and Awards Presentation (February 2021)
COVID Outreach – Union Bar First Nation (October 2020)	Inclusion BC Executive Director's Meeting Presentation (February 2021)
COVID Outreach – Upper Nicola Band (August 2020)	Inclusion BC Virtual Learning Series Advocacy Panel (March 2021)
COVID Outreach – Upper Similkameen Indian Band (August 2020)	Indigenous Perspectives Society Aboriginal Social Work Training Information Sessions (July and November 2020)
COVID Outreach – Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Victoria (July 2020)	Indigenous Perspective Society Aboriginal Social Work Training Program Graduation Ceremonies (December 2020 and March 2021)
COVID Outreach – Wachiyay Friendship Centre Society, Courtenay (June 2020)	



Indigenous Perspectives Society Community Event (August 2020)	Online Facilitation Practice Series, Amanda Fenton Consulting (December 2020, January and February 2021)
Indigenous Perspectives Society RCY Information Session (February 2021)	Orange Shirt Day Every Child Matters Ceremony (September 2020)
International Institute for Child Rights and Development Cultural Connections Event (June 2020)	Prince George Youth Custody Services Centre Advocacy Outreach Clinic (Monthly, April 2020 to March 2021)
Intersect Youth & Family Services Society RCY Information Session (September 2020)	Reimagining Justice: BC/Yukon Action Committee's Regional Colloquia Series (November 2020)
John Howard Society of North Island RCY Information Sessions and Materials (April 2020 and January 2021)	SEED Summit Compassionate Systems Leadership Presentation and Aspiration for Growth and Change Panelist (February 2021)
John Oliver Secondary – Rights Workshops Presentation (April 2020)	Society for Children and Youth of B.C. A Night for Rights 2020 Event (November 2020)
Lake Babine Nation Presentation (January 2021)	Statutory Orientation Session for Members of the 42nd Parliament (January 2021)
McCreary Centre Society TRRUST Collective Gathering Presentation (January 2021)	Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services Annual General Meeting (October 2020)
MCFD-Nanaimo RCY information Session and Materials (October 2020)	Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Clinic Provincial Meeting Presentation (October 2020)
MCFD-New Westminster RCY information Session and Materials (October 2020)	RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, Association of Student Aid Professionals Conference (April 2020)
MCFD's Service Delivery Division Leadership Meeting – RCY Meet and Greet (October 2020)	RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, Coast Mountain College (February 2021)
MCFD's Service Delivery Division Leadership Meeting (February 2021)	RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, Cowichan Youth Services (April 2020)
MCFD's Strategic Integration, Policy & Legislation Division All-Staff Meeting Presentation (March 2021)	RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks Rights Workshop (February 2021)
Ministry of Attorney General Court Services Presentation (January 2021)	RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, Inclusion BC Conference (May 2020)
National Youth Justice Network Presentation (January 2021)	RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, Post Secondary Students Information Session (March 2021)
Oak Child and Youth Advocacy Centre RCY Information Session (September 2020)	
Office of the Human Rights Commissioner Implication of Collecting Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection Presentation (November 2020)	
Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, B.C. Presentation (February 2021)	



- RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, Selkirk College (February 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, Vancouver Island University (June 2020)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver Project Presentation, YWCA STRIVE (February 2021)
- RCY Webinar on Self-Advocacy for The Foundry (August 2020)
- Simon Fraser University, Children's Health Policy Centre Presentation: COVID-19 and the Impact on Children's Mental Health (December 2020)
- UNICEF Canada's National Child Day Event Presentation: Child and Youth Mental Health during COVID-19 (November 2020)
- University of British Columbia Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) Expo Session 1 (February 2021)
- University of British Columbia, Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) EXPO Session 2 Presentation: The Impacts of COVID-19: What's happening with BC's children and families? (March 2021)
- University of British Columbia, Dean's Distinguished Speaker Lecture: Rights and Belonging – Bringing Janusz Korczak's Legacy to Life in Contemporary Times and Janusz Korczak Medal Award Ceremony (January 2021)
- University of British Columbia, Interprofessional Continuing Education – 7th Biennial Conference on Developmental Disabilities (November 2020)
- University of Victoria, School of Child and Youth Care Presentation (July 2021)
- University of Victoria, Faculty of Education Presentation (March 2021)
- University of Victoria, Faculty of Law Presentation (June 2020)
- Vancouver Island Health Authority RCY Information Session (March 2021)
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre RCY information Session and Materials (October 2020)
- Youth and Family Substance Use Services Nanaimo Leaders Event (April 2020)

## Meetings

### Child-, Youth- and Young Adult-Serving Organizations

- Alberta Child and Youth Advocate
- A Way Home Kamloops
- Aunt Leah's Place
- Autism Community Training (ACT)
- BC Association of Child Development and Intervention
- Children's and Women's Health Centre of British Columbia
- BCEdAccess
- BC Complex Kids Society
- Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates
- Child Health BC, BC Children's Hospital and BC Healthy Child Development Alliance
- Children's Forum
- Community Legal Assistance Society
- Ending Violence Association of BC
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- Family Support Institute
- Federation of Community Social Services of BC
- Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
- Foster Parents Support Services Society
- Inclusion BC
- International Institute for Child Rights and Development
- Janusz Korczak Association of Canada
- Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth



McCreary Centre Society  
 McCreary Centre Society TRRUST Collective  
 Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council  
 Ontario Human Rights Commission  
 Pacific Coast Community Resources

Prince Edward Island Child and Youth Advocate  
 Prince George Youth Custody Services Centre  
 Directors Meeting  
 Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth  
 Society for Children and Youth of BC  
 Yukon Child and Youth Advocate

## First Nation, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous Leadership/Organizations

Aboriginal Infant Development Programs of BC  
 Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services Society  
 BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres  
 BC First Nations Justice Council  
 Delegated Aboriginal Agency Executive  
 Delegated Aboriginal Agency Partnership  
 Duane Jackson  
 First Nations Leadership Council  
 Kw'umut Lelum Child and Family Services  
 Lake Babine Nation  
 Métis Commission for Children and Families of BC

Métis Nation British Columbia  
 Mid Island Métis Nation  
 Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre  
 Port Alberni Friendship Centre  
 Snuneymuxw First Nation  
 Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society  
 Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs  
 Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society  
 Xyolhemeylh/Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society

## Government Organizations

Advocate for Service Quality  
 B.C. Ministry of Attorney General  
 B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development  
 B.C. Ministry of Education  
 B.C. Ministry of Health  
 B.C. Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions  
 B.C. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
 B.C. Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
 Community Living BC  
 Elections BC  
 Fraser Health Authority  
 Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada  
 Interior Health Authority

Island Health Authority  
 Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia  
 Members of Legislative Assembly of B.C.  
 Mental Health Review Board  
 Northern Health Authority  
 Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia  
 Office of the Chief Coroner, B.C.  
 Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, B.C.  
 Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, B.C.  
 Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, B.C.  
 Office of the Merit Commissioner, B.C.  
 Office of the Ombudsperson, B.C.  
 Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner, B.C.  
 Provincial Health Officer, B.C.





Provincial Health Services Authority  
Public Guardian and Trustee, B.C.  
Regional Health Authorities Working Group

Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth  
Select Standing Committee on Finance and  
Government Services  
Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

### Other Organizations

Access to Justice BC (A2JBC) Family Justice  
Leadership Strategy Group, Jane Morley  
BC Children's Hospital Research Institute  
BC Civil Liberties Association  
BC Family Justice Innovation Lab  
BC Law Institute  
BC Teachers' Federation  
All My Relations: Trauma-Informed Engagement  
(part of 2021 Bruce and Lis Welch  
Community Dialogue)  
Canadian Institutes of Health Research  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
Canadian Red Cross  
CanFASD (Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum  
Disorder Research Network)  
Carleton University Research Virtual  
Environment (CURVE)  
Children's Resilience Strategic Network  
Organizing Group  
College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC  
Community Coordination for Women's Safety  
First Call BC: Child and Youth Advocacy Society

FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against  
Women and Children, Simon Fraser University  
Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy  
Laurentian University  
Legal Services Society  
Muttart Foundation  
OneSky Community Resources  
Provincial Association of Residential and  
Community Agencies (PARCA)  
Pathways to Healing Partnership  
Simon Fraser University  
University of British Columbia  
University of British Columbia, Human Early  
Learning Partnership (HELP)  
University of California, Los Angeles  
University of Northern British Columbia  
University of Regina  
University of Victoria  
Victoria Police Department







# Contact Information



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## SOCIAL MEDIA



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and RCYBC Youth



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CHILDREN AND YOUTH