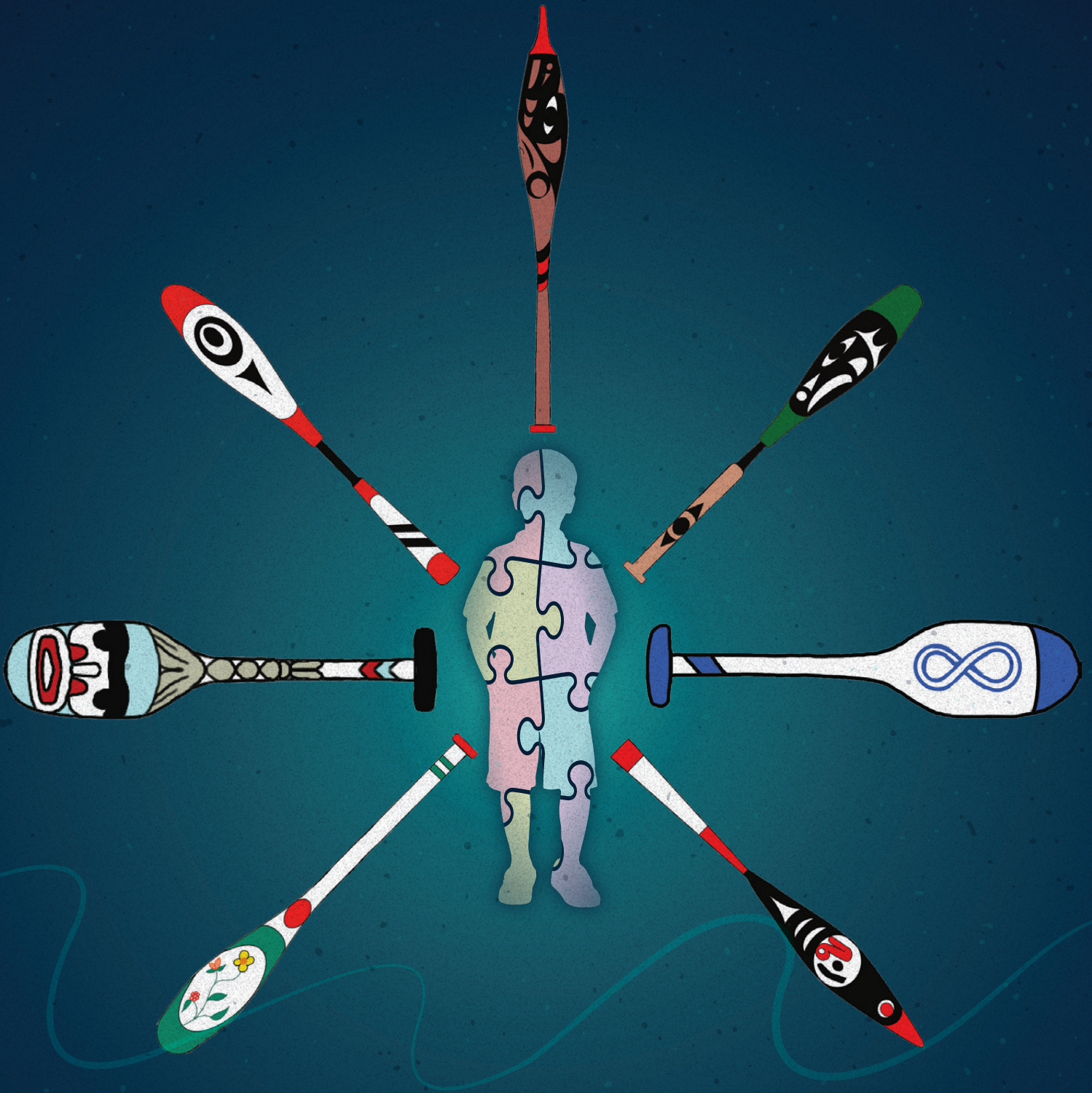


# Annual Report 2022/23 and Service Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26



REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH



*Front cover paddle art by former RCY Knowledge Keeper  
Yuxwelupton Qwal' qaxala (Bradley Dick)*

*Photo by Aaraksh Siwakoti*

Sept. 29, 2023

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 2022/23 Annual Report and the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Service Plan of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to the Legislative Assembly.

This document reports on the period April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 and covers activities underway and planned for the April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2026 period. 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 black ink, reading "J Charlesworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. 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

Mike Bernier, MLA  
Deputy Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

The Representative and staff, working 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 lək'wəŋən (place to smoke herring) people of 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.

### Message from RCY's Traditional Knowledge Keeper (nogad'ga'leeth)

#### **Children: Our treasure, our gift, our reason for living**

Indigenous cultures across British Columbia viewed children as gifts, some from above, as treasures, as our 'little flowers,' and as our reason for living. In one cultural group, the Kwakwaka'wakw of Vancouver Island, newborn children were named after the village. Their name was magnified, so the child became the "big village." Not only did it take a village to raise the child, but it also took a child to raise the village. Recognizing the child as the mirror of one's future, a constellation of family and village members mentored and guided the child along a path that illumined the values of love, respect, safety and belonging. These children knew where they came from, who they belonged to, who belonged to them, and what it meant to be a big village.

Gilakas'la!

Chief Wedlidi Speck



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## Representative for Children and Youth

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth is a second generation settler to British Columbia with roots in the Scottish Highlands, southern England and Wales. She is deeply grateful to live in the traditional territories of the ɫəkʷəŋən and ƳSÁNEĆ peoples and to have raised her two daughters on these beautiful lands.

Dr. Charlesworth has been British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth since Oct. 1, 2018. She was reappointed for a second five-year term in May 2023, to begin Oct. 1, 2023. As she completes her first term as Representative, she is particularly proud of the work that the RCY team has done to expand and deepen engagement, enhance cultural awareness and understanding and promote belonging and connection for young people.

Under Dr. Charlesworth's leadership, the RCY team has engaged broadly and intentionally with children, youth, young adults and families as well as with First Nations, Métis and Urban Indigenous leaders and organizations, community partners and government ministries that serve young people. As a result of this deep engagement, as well as data reported to the Office, investigative findings and systemic reviews, Dr. Charlesworth has identified key priority areas for the Office. These areas include: supporting the resumption of child welfare jurisdiction by First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples; child and youth mental health and substance use; children and youth with support needs; young people transitioning to adulthood; quality of care; and a focus on the early years and supports to keep families safely together.

Prior to her appointment as the Representative, Dr. Charlesworth had been working with other leaders – including hereditary chiefs and knowledge carriers – to inspire Indigenous and cross-cultural awareness, understanding, humility and safety. She brought this learning and commitment to creating culturally safer spaces for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous families and staff with her to RCY. In 2018, she engaged Cultural Safety Advisor Harley Eagle, who guided RCY's cultural safety and anti-racism learning. In 2021, the Office's first Knowledge Keeper, Yuxwelupton, was hired to sustain and expand this work, as well as deepen connections with Elders and Matriarchs who now provide guidance to RCY on key projects and reports. While there is still much unlearning and new learning to be done, RCY is committed to the journey of decolonizing and reconciliation.



Among the many important truth-telling reports that Dr. Charlesworth has released since her appointment, the one that has influenced her thinking and ways of being most has been *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging*. This report led to a whole-of-RCY focus on promoting young people's connection and belonging to people, place, culture and a sense of identity – particularly for those who are in government care.

Dr. Charlesworth comes to the role of Representative with more than four decades of service in the B.C. social and health care sectors. While serving in diverse front-line child welfare, social policy, program management and executive roles within the provincial government between 1980 and 1997, she was engaged in formative work on deinstitutionalization, community inclusion for people with disabilities, women's and girls' health, mental health, youth services, legislative reform and the implementation of recommendations from the Gove Inquiry into Child Protection, which led to the formation of the then-named Ministry for Children and Families.

After leaving government in 1997, Dr. Charlesworth completed her PhD on the power of women's voice in the face of adversity, taught child and youth care at the University of Victoria and consulted with non-profit and social purpose organizations throughout B.C., thus gaining insights into the different strengths, needs and challenges of communities of all sizes. In 2006, Dr. Charlesworth became the Executive Director of the Federation of Community Social Services of B.C. During her tenure, she grew the membership, scope and influence of the organization and built relationships 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 founded the Leadership 2020 program to enhance leadership capacities in the community, government and Indigenous services sectors, and co-led a comprehensive review of child and youth residential care in B.C.

After leaving the Federation, Dr. Charlesworth was immersed in developing the leadership, innovation and cultural awareness of the community-based social care sector. She was 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. She 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.

Dr. Charlesworth has a PhD in Child and Youth Care from the University of Victoria, and a Global MBA from Oxford Brookes University in Oxford, England with a specialization in social innovation. She is an award-winning teacher, author, activist and a joyful parent of two vibrant adults who are her greatest teachers.



# A Message from the Representative for Children and Youth

The *Annual Report and Service Plan* that follows on these pages signals the end of my first five-year term as B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth and the beginning of my second and final term in the Office. Therefore, it is fitting to both reflect upon what RCY has accomplished since 2018 and, most importantly, to examine the challenges that still lie ahead.

It continues to be my greatest honour to serve as Representative, working alongside a talented and passionate RCY staff, shoulder-to-shoulder with First Nations and Métis leaders and their communities, in strong collaboration with colleagues and allies from across service delivery systems, and reporting to Members of the Select Standing Committees on Children and Youth (SSCCY) and Finance and Government Services (SSCFGS). I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Legislative Assembly's Special Committee to Appoint a Representative for Children and Youth for its decision to re-appoint me to this trusted position for a second five-year term, as I continue my 46th year in the child- and youth-serving field.

There is much to be proud of when looking back at the work we have done at RCY. Since September 2018, we have advocated for more than 8,600 children, youth and young adults, helping them and their families through what can often be a confusing tangle of service systems. We have produced 24 public reports on subjects ranging from proper planning for children in care, to improving services for children and youth with support needs, to the effects of the pandemic on child and youth mental health and well-being. One of those public reports – *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging (2020)* – was a ground-breaking example of an investigation done in a different and much more relational way that has resulted in a greater focus by government on the importance of "belonging" in the lives of the children and youth for whom it cares.

RCY's strategic and systemic advocacy has helped to spur significant improvements to government supports for youth transitioning out of care and into adulthood. It has also mobilized advocacy and action concerning children and youth with support needs, residential services for children and youth in care, mental health and substance use supports, inequitable and discriminatory funding for Indigenous children, and the promotion of child rights and voice in matters that affect them such as instances of detention under the *Mental Health Act*.

These are changing times in the child- and youth-serving systems of B.C. and Canada. Recent federal and provincial legislation re-asserting First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities' inherent rights to manage their own child welfare has prompted RCY to focus intently on how we can best be of assistance during that transformation and to envision what our role might look like in the future. Therefore, we have worked diligently to strengthen and expand our relationships with Indigenous communities and First Nations and Métis leadership during the past five years.

We have also expanded our relationships with the academic and research world, partnering on a number of projects to tap into expertise we don't have in-house, including with Simon Fraser University's Children's Health Policy Centre, UBC's Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, the



University of Ottawa's Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, the University of Victoria's Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, the McCreary Centre Society, InWithForward, and academics from six public universities in B.C. to deliver timely research and engagement on a number of key topics. These partnerships not only help to inform our reports, they also help us to advocate with decision-makers on behalf of all children, youth and families in B.C. with a solid evidence base behind us.

I believe we have done good work and moved RCY into a stronger overall role as an Office that safeguards and promotes children's rights and well-being across this province. We still conduct important investigations into individual cases that reflect larger systemic issues. Just as importantly, we focus on aggregate reports, special topic reports, research papers, monitoring reports and bringing different voices together to discuss solutions. We also have "quiet" conversations behind the scenes with decision-makers in order to positively influence case and program planning, policy, practice and resource allocation. These respectful, relational conversations help us to be responsive to the urgent issues and needs that we see through our work.

Having said all of this, I must also admit to some frustration over the immense challenges that remain in B.C.'s child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems. There is still so much work to do – by all of us who are part of those systems – in order to ensure that they become more caring, responsive, equitable, efficient and effective.

Nowhere are the challenges more evident than in the heart-breaking story – widely covered in the media – of the First Nations children who experienced horrific abuse while living in a foster home in the Fraser region. I have recently taken the unprecedented step of announcing that RCY will investigate the life circumstances and events leading up to the death of an 11-year-old boy in that situation. I believe that the investigation will point to systemic issues and have been urged by First Nations' leadership and others to illuminate and address these. As such, the investigation will be twinned with a systemic review and will identify opportunities to significantly improve child-serving systems and uphold children's rights.

I am in no way pre-judging the outcome of the investigation and systemic review, but it is safe to say that a range of needs and interests of the children in this home were not put at the centre. That simply has to change. As a society, we must do better.

This is a complex story, as are many of the issues in today's child- and youth-serving systems. Problems that have existed in these colonial systems for years are now being exacerbated by the lingering effects of the pandemic, the workforce shortage, the lack of robust leadership and resources, the housing crisis, the toxic drug crisis and ongoing economic inequality and poverty. Long-standing problems have become more prevalent and glaring as strain is being placed on an already-beleaguered system by these factors. At the same time, there are significant developments with respect to Indigenous child, youth and family well-being with the aforementioned resumption of jurisdiction having been enabled through amendments to the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCS Act)* and the enactment of the federal *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families*. Progress made on the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's ruling concerning the underfunded First Nations child welfare system and past harms is another positive and transformative opportunity. All of these factors – some troubling and long-standing and others exciting and new – create a complex and dynamic landscape that calls for thoughtful and progressive leadership, truth-telling and action.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The bottom line? The enduring well-being of children, youth, young adults and their families has to be the primary and over-riding focus of the public systems that support them. Too often, that is still not the case. That is where my frustration – and the frustration of many others who work in this sector – begins.

We still see significant inequity when it comes public services for children and youth. While we have addressed these inequities in many of our public reports, the progress that has been made is simply not sufficient. For example, Indigenous children, youth and their families still experience a staggering over-involvement of the child welfare system in their lives. Recent improvements in federal funding have been substantial, however these have not been matched at the provincial level. While funding and consequent services and supports for children and youth on-reserve has increased, many children and youth living off-reserve continue to receive insufficient resources. Children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) still receive relatively miniscule support even though their needs are obvious and no less worthy than those of other children with support needs. There is still no robust array of voluntary services and supports available for children and youth who use substances, including supports for families and harm reduction – despite the urgent calls from RCY and many others including the Chief Coroner, the Provincial Health Officer, First Nations Health Authority and young people and families themselves. Wait lists for things like neuro-developmental assessments, counselling, and mental health and substance use supports and treatment remain constant and lengthy in B.C. Residential services for children and youth in care remain woefully inadequate to meet the various and complex needs of young people. And this is certainly not an exhaustive list of the shortcomings we see in our day-to-day work.

It is our job at RCY to do all we can to hone the focus of government and the public on what is most important: to ensure the voices of children, youth and their families are heard, and that the decision-makers are well-informed. In order to do that, we prioritized the following areas for RCY's work in fiscal 2022/23:

*Indigenous child welfare* – supporting assertion of child welfare jurisdiction by First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities while also influencing systemic change to improve current services to Indigenous children and youth

*Children and youth with support needs* – encouraging a comprehensive and equitable policy and program/service transformation for children and youth with support needs and immediate action to meet the needs of those unserved or underserved by the current system

*Mental health and substance use services* – advocating for a culturally attuned, trauma- and evidence-informed, and youth-focused approach to the provision of mental health and substance use supports with a focus on the intersection between these

*Youth transitions* – continuing to advocate for and monitor the implementation of a comprehensive array of transitional support services for young adults who have left care, to ensure their transition to adulthood is successful

*Residential services* – advocating for improvements to residential services for children and youth, including those with complex needs, with a strong focus on enhancing quality of care and accountability



*Child rights, voice and participation* – promoting children's rights generally – including children's participation, voice and representation in decisions affecting them – with a focus on the rights and needs of children who are more vulnerable due to their life circumstances and/or societal attitudes

*Keeping families safely together* – guiding attention to, and advocating for investment in, policies, programs and services that better assist families with vulnerabilities to successfully and safely raise their children, and

*Complex needs and quality of care* – advocating for improved planning and supports and quality of care for children and youth with complex needs.

How will we do all of this? Certainly, we will continue the important core work that is mandated under the *Representative for Children and Youth Act (RCY Act)*. We will continue our strong individual advocacy on behalf of children, youth and young adults; we will continue to carefully review and interpret the reports of critical injuries and deaths received by our Office; and we will continue our monitoring function to ensure that we have a good grasp on the state of public services provided to young people and their families in order to advocate for systemic improvement.

But we are looking to do better, to do more – especially with regard to issues where systems seem to be "stuck" with no solutions in sight. These weighty issues include: how to best keep youth safe in the midst of a toxic drug crisis; the development of a full spectrum of residential care capable of accommodating all young people who can't live at home; and the development of a system that adequately and equitably serves children with support needs.

These are examples of a number of complex issues that have no simple solutions. Part of our role at RCY is to raise awareness of these issues – through our reports, knowledge mobilization, community and sector mobilization such as in our work with the support needs community and, increasingly, through convening the young people and families with lived expertise, professionals, researchers, experts and decision-makers to find common ground and identify better approaches going forward. How to keep youth safer amidst the toxic drug crisis and what can be done to ensure the safety of children and youth who are missing, fleeing or lost while in the care of MCFD and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs) will be two topics on which RCY will lead convening in the coming months.



Representative Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth presenting at the *Our Children, Our Way* Conference, November 2022



## A MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

One of the most significant means RCY has to effect change is through recommendations we make in our public reports. However, in many cases, the complexity of the issues seems to make it difficult for government to take necessary action. In fact, of the 63 RCY recommendations made since 2017, only nine have been fully completed while another six have shown some progress. To date, government has made no substantial progress on 25 – or 40 per cent – of RCY recommendations.

Recommendations that require consultation and collaboration – in other words, recommendations addressing some of the most complex issues – have seen the slowest movement. For example, of the 14 calls RCY has made for engagement with First Nations communities, none have been completed by government and none of the 32 recommendations tied to already-existing government frameworks and "transformation" initiatives have been completed.


RCY does not have the legislative power to compel government to make these necessary changes. But in order to improve compliance, we will continue the detailed tracking and public reporting on the progress made on our recommendations that we began in 2018. We will also continue to listen carefully to children, youth and families, service providers, Indigenous leaders and communities, and we will continue to reflect on how we can make our recommendations more effective in the future.

All the work we do at RCY is with one thought in mind – keeping children, youth, young adults and their well-being at the centre, and encouraging government to do the same.

The document that follows outlines the approach to meeting my accountability to young people and families, 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 2022/23 and outlines RCY's planned strategic initiatives for 2023/24 to 2025/26. 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.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity I have in the Representative's role to serve children, youth, young adults and families and to engage with and learn from Indigenous leaders, service providers, researchers and others who are working every day to lift up young people – especially those who are experiencing heightened vulnerabilities due to the enduring impacts of colonization, poverty, violence, discrimination and inequities. These are difficult times and it will take collective will, collaboration and creativity to build new systems of care and ways of being that nurture the well-being of young people. From my vantage point, I see deeply troubling situations that make my heart ache, but I also see good work and vision throughout B.C. and I choose to remain hopeful and energetic for change.

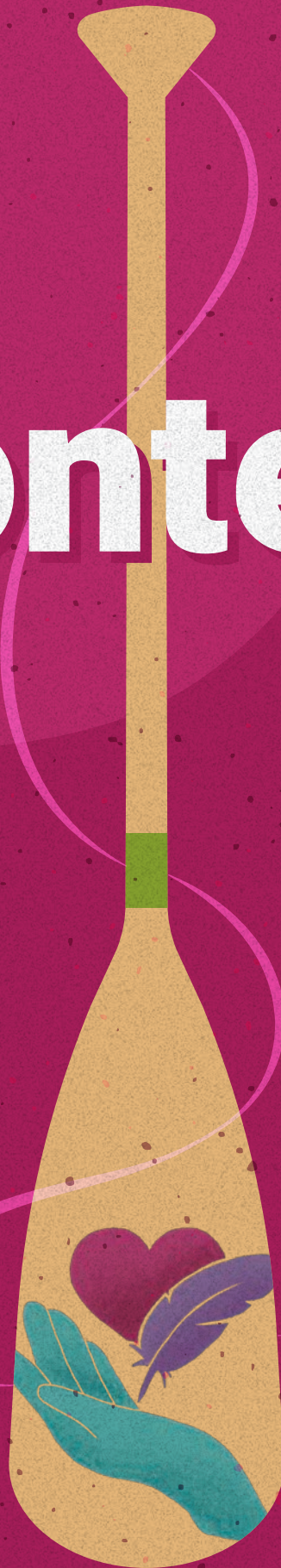
In kindness,



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth  
Representative for Children and Youth



# Context



# The Environment in Which We Work

The Representative's mandate is inclusive of all children and youth in B.C. Some children, youth and young adults, however, have needs that require extra assistance and services in order for them to thrive and this is where RCY focuses its time, expertise and influence. Government provides a range of programs to address these needs, to support parents and families caring for their children, and to ensure children's health and well-being.

Children, youth, young adults and their families live in a broader environment with their health and well-being determined by larger socio-economic structures. They may experience the negative effects of poverty, intergenerational trauma, income insecurity, food insecurity, lack of housing availability and affordability, lack of community safety, and indirect and direct harms associated with the toxic drug crisis. These factors experienced early in a child's life exacerbate vulnerabilities and set the stage for disruption and poorer long-term outcomes. The situation is compounded by fragmented and inadequate policy, inequitable access to resources and a history of colonial violence against Indigenous people.

The Representative is responsible for monitoring the child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems in B.C. and advocating for change to services and programs to achieve better outcomes for young people and their families. However, it is recognized – given the impact of broader social and economic conditions and the complexity of existing systems – that achieving improvements to services is not an easy undertaking. Solutions are not simple, often requiring change at a broader systems level.

The Representative and her staff shine a light on issues and trends in the systems of care and support. Due to the complex and cross-cutting nature of many issues, RCY often collaborates with others within these systems to ensure broader impacts and perspectives are taken into consideration as it seeks to recommend meaningful solutions. Throughout this report, a series of text boxes highlight the work that the Representative has undertaken with key partners.

## Fast Fact

As of March 31, 2023, 7,675 children and youth live in out-of-home care with the largest proportion in care (4,875 or 64 per cent in care), followed by a substantial number of children and youth living with extended family or community members, through the Extended Family Program (1,083 or 14 per cent), out-of-care options (867 or one per cent), and through the Child in the Home of a Relative Program (215 or three per cent – program discontinued in March 2010). The remaining 635 or eight per cent were youth living in out-of-home care under Youth Agreements.

**Source:** MCFD



# Enhancing equity and justice through individual and systemic advocacy

## Inequality

Unequal access to opportunities



## Equality

Even distribution of resources, tools and assistance without consideration of how those facing ongoing barriers could access them



## Equity or Substantive Equality

Resources, tools and assistance that are designed to help overcome the historical and contemporary barriers to participation and inclusion



## Justice

Fixing the systems that contributed to inequality and inequities in the first place



## CONTEXT

While the Representative advocates for the rights of all children and youth in B.C., the focus of RCY's work is on services and programs to children, youth and young adults receiving government-funded reviewable or designated services.

This includes, generally:

- family, children and youth-in-care services delivered under the *CFCAS Act*
- guardianship and adoption services
- children and youth with support needs
- child and youth mental health programs
- substance use services for children and youth
- services for young adults including those eligible for Community Living BC (CLBC) services and young adults eligible for Agreements with Young Adults and/or the Provincial Tuition Waiver program
- youth justice services.

The Children and Youth in B.C. By the Numbers table is intended to illustrate some key indicators related to government-funded designated and reviewable services.

Children and Youth in B.C. BY THE NUMBERS	
<b>4,875</b>	Number of children and youth in care as of March 31, 2023
<b>3,294</b>	Number of Indigenous children and youth in care as of March 31, 2023
<b>722</b>	Number of youth who aged out of government care and Youth Agreements in fiscal year 2022/23
<b>31,770</b>	Number of children and youth with support needs eligible for supports as of March 31, 2023
<b>8,453</b>	Number of children and youth on B.C. Autism Assessment Network waitlist as of March 31, 2023
<b>84.3</b>	Average wait time (in weeks) for BC Autism Assessment Network autism assessment
<b>893</b>	Number of children and youth on Complex Behavioural and Developmental Condition waitlist as of March 31, 2023 <sup>1</sup>
<b>55</b>	Average wait time (in weeks) for Complex Developmental and Behavioural Condition assessment
<b>9,878</b>	Number of 19- to 27-year-olds receiving services from CLBC as of March 31, 2023
<b>10,910</b>	Number of children and youth receiving Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) services as of March 31, 2023
<b>36</b>	Number of illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2022 among those under age 19
<b>15</b>	Average daily number of youth in B.C.'s two custody centres in the 2022/23 fiscal year
<b>808</b>	Average annual youth community justice caseload for 2022/23, including youth in custody

<sup>1</sup> Complex Behavioural and Developmental Condition (CDBC) assessment provides diagnostic assessment services for children and youth who have significant difficulties in multiple areas of function. This includes children and youth with suspected intellectual disability or prenatal substance exposure.

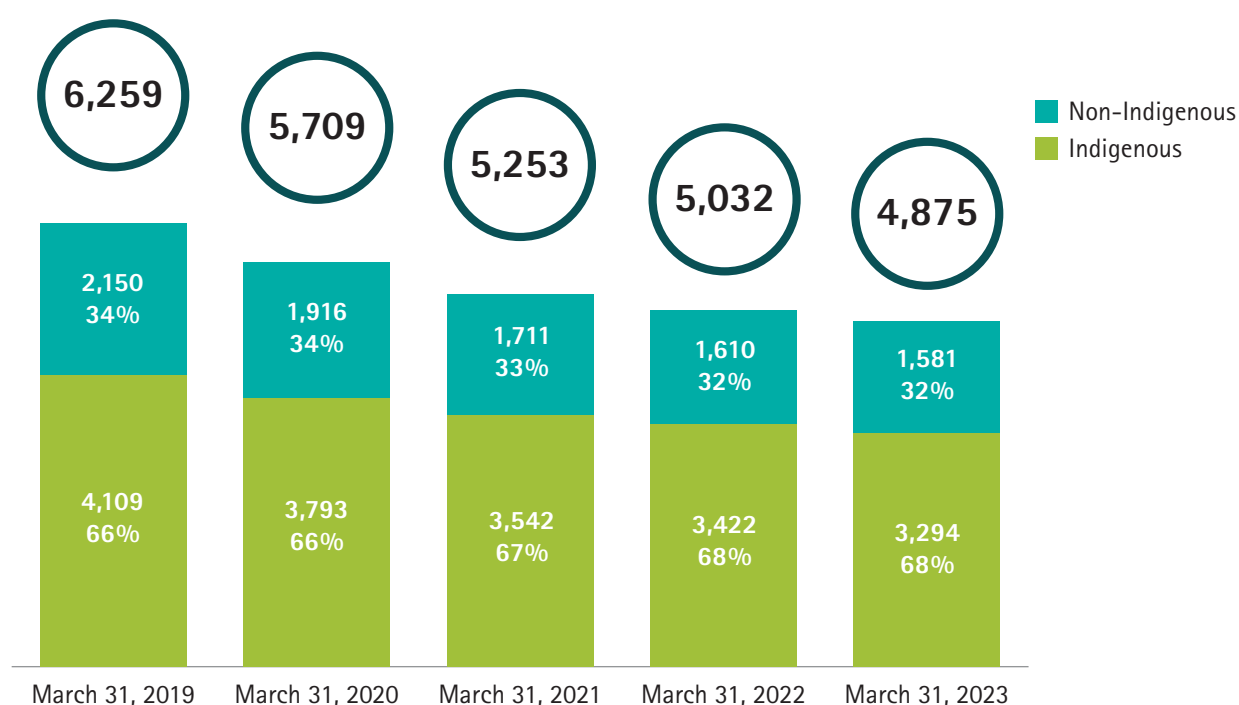


## A focus on Indigenous children, youth and families

Colonization, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and the continued impact of intergenerational trauma have resulted in a tragic legacy of over-involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of Indigenous children and families. For example, in B.C., an Indigenous child is 18 times more likely than a non-Indigenous child to be in government care.

Although the overall number of children and youth in care in B.C. is declining, the proportion of children and youth in care who are Indigenous is increasing slightly. Figures 1 and 2 below show the number and proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in care for the years 2019 to 2023 and the Indigenous status of these children and youth for the 2022/23 fiscal year.

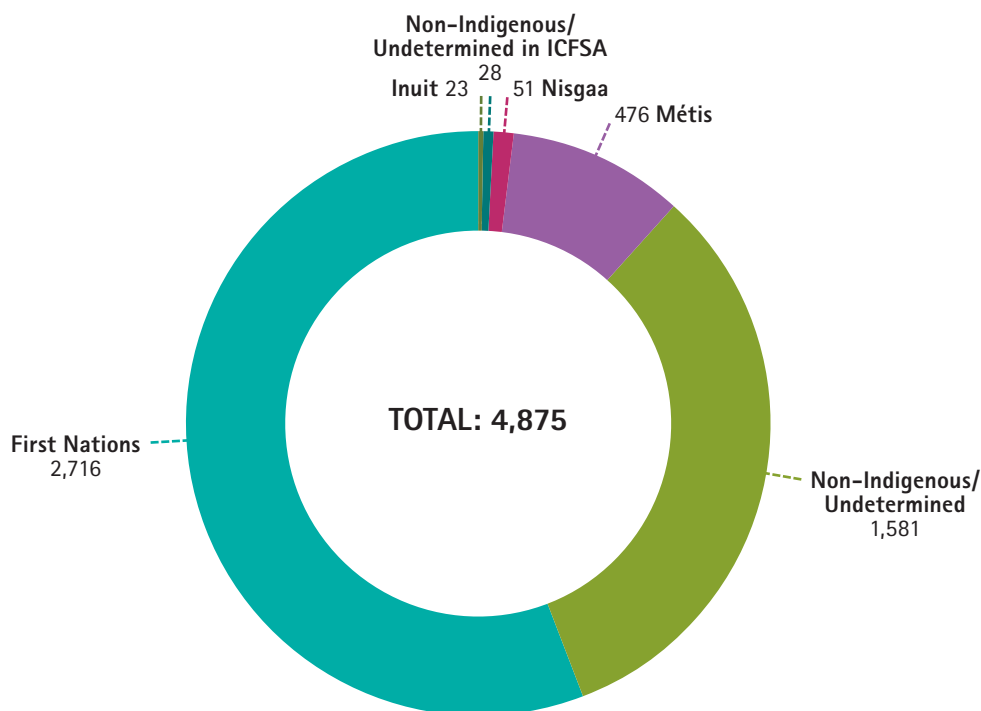
**Figure 1 – Number and Proportion of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Children and Youth in Care at Fiscal Year-end, 2019 to 2023**



Note: The numbers have shifted slightly from RCY's 2021/22 Annual Report and Service Plan due to adjustments made by MCFD to its numbers.



Figure 2 – Number of Children and Youth in Care at Fiscal Year-end by Indigenous Status



Given this over-involvement, and the often inadequate and inappropriate support services provided to Indigenous children and families, the Representative has a particular responsibility and obligation to Indigenous children, youth and young adults and their families. In this work, the Representative is guided by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*, *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)*, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*.

Over the past five years, RCY has also become increasingly attuned and attentive to the shifting context of its work in relation to First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth. This includes developments such as the passage of legislation at the federal and provincial levels affirming the rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to have jurisdiction over child and family services which will have an impact on RCY as services change.

RCY's strategic priorities are informed by this evolving context and the Office's internal processes and structures continue to be enhanced to support delivery of priorities in an agile, trauma-aware, anti-racist and respectful way. Significant and meaningful relational work, engagement and collaboration with First Nations, Métis Nation BC (MNBC), Indigenous Governing Bodies, Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs), Indigenous-led organizations and Indigenous leadership also continues to be essential given the potential role that RCY could play for some Indigenous Governing Bodies as they resume responsibility for their children, youth and young adults.



## Widening RCY's Impact

### Sharing the full "story" of the Office

RCY was formed in 2006 as a result of the late Hon. Ted Hughes' comprehensive review of B.C.'s child welfare system. During its first decade of operation, the Office was primarily known for its investigative reports into the deaths and critical injuries of children and youth receiving government services. Typically, the other work of the Office – individual advocacy and monitoring (systemic advocacy) – was not as well-known by the public.

The current Representative has worked to broaden the scope of RCY's influence – as well as the public perception of the Office – since her first term began in October 2018. Under her leadership, RCY has done fewer in-depth investigations of individual deaths and critical injuries in favour of more aggregate reports and deeper reviews and analyses of important systemic issues. The Office has also placed an emphasis on working closely with young people with lived expertise, families, and partners, including academic institutions and community agencies, to further research into key issues and foster convening on matters central to the well-being of children, youth and young adults in B.C.

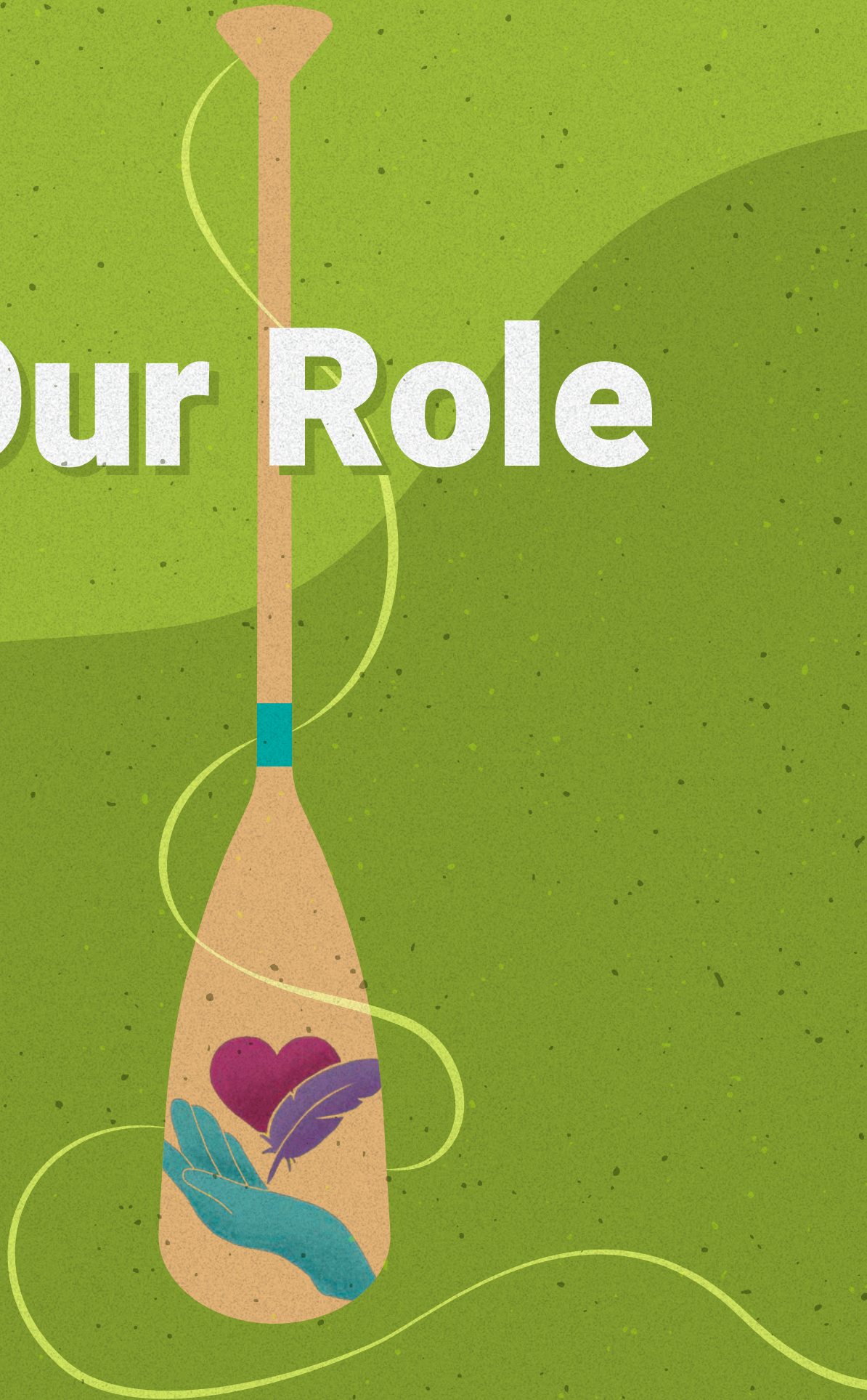
RCY's investigative work does continue, of course, as it is a statutory responsibility of the Office and, in certain cases such as the 2021 death of the child in a foster home in the Fraser Region, an investigation is absolutely necessary to improve the child- and youth-serving systems in B.C. and to help ensure that such tragedies can be prevented.

Within this overall context, the Representative is continuing work to change the perception of the Office so that children, youth and young adults, Indigenous communities and organizations, community partners, decision-makers and the public have a fuller understanding of RCY's purpose and the scope of its work. This is necessary to maximize the Office's ability to interact with all parts of the "system" and to encourage and recommend improvements.

In March 2023, RCY engaged with Taiji, a B.C. company that specializes in unlocking the potential of purpose-driven brands to grow trust, engagement and impact. During the coming fiscal year, RCY will begin telling its "story" in a different way in order to ensure that the Office makes the widest and most positive impact possible on the child-, youth- and young adult-serving landscape of B.C.



# Our Role



# Representative's Legislative Mandate

The Representative for Children and Youth is an independent Officer of the Legislature, appointed by the members of the Legislative Assembly as a whole. The Representative reports to the all-party Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth (SSCCY) and not through a government ministry.

As an independent Officer, the Representative has a duty to hold government accountable to the Legislative Assembly and the public. Through her legislated mandate, the work of the Representative helps members of the Legislative Assembly monitor and assess government programs, procedures and performance. Because of the independence of the Office, the Representative is able to – and, in fact, must – advocate for children, youth, young adults and families, compel evidence for investigations, write and publicly disseminate reports, make recommendations, comment publicly and hold government to account without concern of reprisal.

As an independent advocacy and oversight organization, aside from provision of individual advocacy services, the Office does not directly provide services to children, youth, young adults and their families.

The *RCY Act* defines the Representative's key areas of responsibility and activities. These include the review of critical injuries and deaths reported to the Office and the monitoring of child- and youth-serving systems in the province, in addition to the previously mentioned advocacy services. These mandated responsibilities are outlined in more detail below.

<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 (Systemic Advocacy)</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.





*Representative Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth with RCY All-Staff meeting co-lead Yuxwelupton, March 2023*

Each of these three areas of responsibility has a distinct scope and reach. RCY's Reviews and Investigations team focuses on **reviewable services**, which are services or programs under the *CFCS Act* and *Youth Justice Act* and also include mental health and addictions services for children and youth.

RCY's Individual Advocacy mandate has a broader scope and reach, covering **designated and prescribed services**, which include but are not limited to:

- family support
- child protection
- foster care
- adoption
- guardianship
- children and youth with support needs<sup>2</sup>
- early childhood development and child care services
- mental health and substance use 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 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays
- services under the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program and the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program (TWP) for eligible young adults between their 19<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays.

Under the monitoring (systemic advocacy) function, the Representative has authority to monitor and review the designated child and youth services noted above. In addition, the Representative may, in certain circumstances, review other government-funded programs and services for children and youth where she *"considers it necessary to do so."*<sup>3</sup> Such work culminates in a special report that is made public. This enables RCY to take a whole-child approach in order to meaningfully inform public policy, especially when the well-being of a young person is supported by multiple systems, such as health, education, housing, income security and child and family services.

<sup>2</sup> RCY CYSN jurisdiction is limited to services administered by MCFD.

<sup>3</sup> s.20, *RCY Act*



# Accountability

## Accountability to children, youth and young adults

The Representative's fundamental accountability is to the children, youth and young adults of B.C., upholding their rights to be safe, healthy, educated, supported with specialized care as needed, connected to culture and family, and to be heard. Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and youth in B.C. is at the heart of the Representative's work. As noted earlier, due to the context within which the Office works, RCY has a particular accountability to Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families.

In honouring these responsibilities, the Representative is guided by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)* in addition to the previously mentioned *UNDRIP* and *DRIPA*.

## Reporting

The Representative reports to the SSCCY, an all-party committee of the Legislature responsible for fostering greater awareness and understanding among legislators and citizens about the B.C. child- and youth-serving systems. Each of the Representative's public reports is reviewed by the SSCCY, providing a public record of discussion.

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (SSCFGS) is responsible for reviewing the annual reports, three-year service plans and budgets of all independent or statutory officers of the Legislature. Under this authority, the SSCFGS considers and makes recommendations on the *Annual Report and 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.



Photo by Aaraksh Siwakoti



### 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 the CCCYA work to advance the rights of children and youth and to promote their voices.

CCCYA members meet regularly and work together to identify areas of mutual concern and develop ways to address issues at a national level. In 2022/23, the CCCYA met three times: an in-person meeting on May 31 and June 1, 2022 in Whitehorse; an in-person meeting on Sept. 14 and 15, 2022 in Montreal; and a virtual meeting on Jan. 31, 2023.

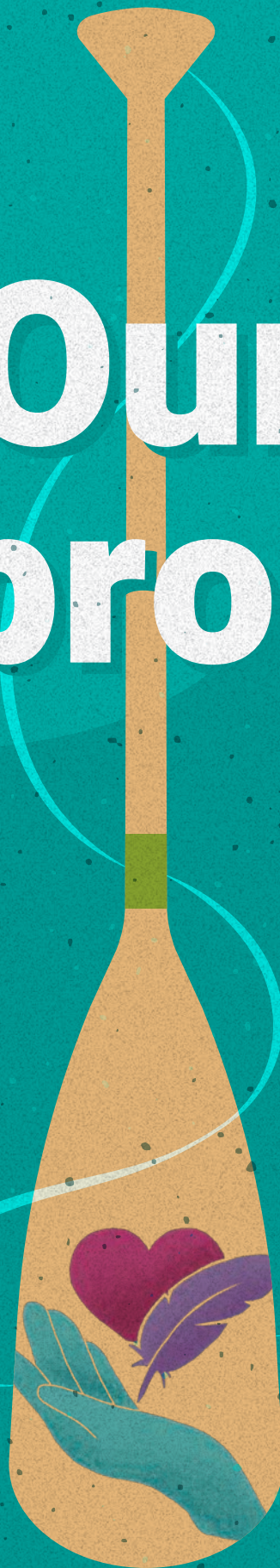
The Representative was also part of a CCCYA working group on systemic issues and child's rights, participating in a series of meetings over the year.

During the 2022/23 fiscal year, the CCCYA released three media statements, presented and made submissions to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and engaged with federal committees and senators on a range of issues, notably:

- April 2022, the CCCYA made a submission to the chairperson of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child titled "Additional Information Submitted in Advance of Canada's Plenary Session (50<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)"
- May 17, 2022, the CCCYA issued a media statement "Canada's Appearance before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child: CCCYA Calls for Concrete Action on Improving Respect for Children's Rights"
- June 14, 2022, the CCCYA issued a media statement "Committee on the Rights of the Child Releases its Concluding Observations for Canada"
- Nov. 17, 2022, the CCCYA issued a media statement "National Council for Children and Youth Seeks Progress on Health and Welfare in Recognition of National Child Day."



# Our Approach



# Paddling Forward

In 2021/22, RCY renewed its strategic direction and priorities and made innovations and changes to its internal structure and processes. The overarching Paddling Forward strategy – which guides and frames the work of RCY – enhances the Office’s ability and capacity to be nimble, responsive and effective in addressing the issues faced by children, youth, young adults and families in B.C.

## The Paddling Forward Strategy

To best understand the Paddling Forward strategy and its components, RCY uses the metaphor of canoes on a shared journey.

The canoes represent RCY itself. Embedded in the design and construction of the canoes are RCY’s six core values. The framework of the canoes is also supported by RCY internal structures, policies and processes (which RCY refers to as its “enabling mechanisms”) that support the flexibility, integrity and ability of the canoes to be responsive to changing conditions.

The paddlers in the canoe represent RCY staff – and others with whom they engage and collaborate – who are united by their passion for and commitment to the well-being of children, youth and young adults. They paddle together to effect meaningful and sustainable change in child, youth and young adult services and systems. Given the many challenges and heartbreaks inherent in RCY’s work and journey, staff health and well-being is an essential organizational responsibility which is supported by the enabling mechanisms noted above and the supplies in the canoes, described below.

The paddles represent what RCY is pulling for. This includes the realization of the four principles that are foundational to the work of the Office as well as the goals and priorities of RCY. The paddles also embody the projects that shine a light on the experiences of children, youth and young adults and identify how practices, services and systems can better meet their needs and aspirations.

The supplies in the canoe include the maps, plans, resources, tools, materials and sustenance that the paddlers need in order to do their work in a good way. This includes project charters, research designs, methodologies, engagement strategies and guidelines for stewarding projects from beginning to end.

Although we have multiple canoes travelling to different destinations along the way, our maps guide us towards a shared destination of lasting, positive life experiences and outcomes for children, youth and young adults in B.C. Of course, no difficult journey is successful without help and encouragement. RCY is incredibly fortunate to have strong, respectful and reciprocal relationships with many individuals, organizations and networks who sometimes paddle with us, and sometimes greet and support us on the shores. These include Elders and Matriarchs, Knowledge Keepers, leaders in government and agencies, researchers, service providers, family members and of course young people themselves.



The Paddling Forward strategic approach underlies how RCY undertakes the three components of its work:

- high-quality core statutory work
- strategic priority projects informed by, and arising from, the core statutory work of the Office and guidance from children, youth, young adults, families, service providers, Indigenous leaders, researchers, academics and others. These projects are focused on improving child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems, and
- ongoing attention to internal enabling mechanisms to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

## Our Values – The Six Rs

RCY is committed to live by the values of the "Six Rs," which guide the work of the Office both externally and internally.

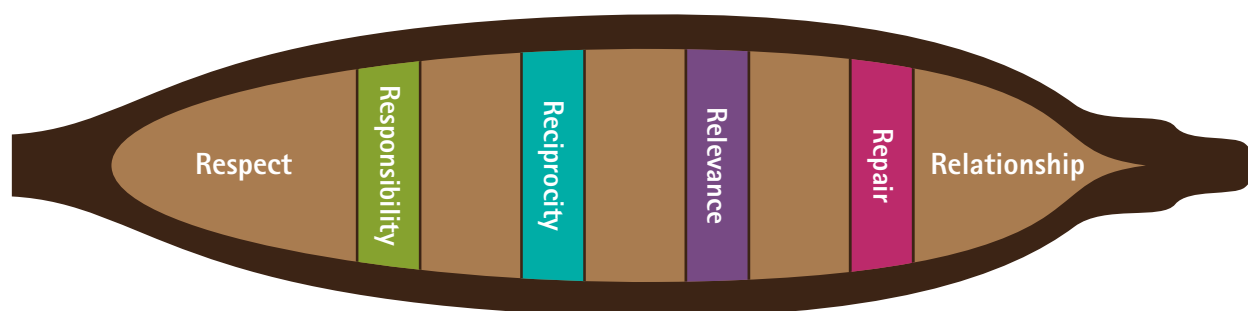
The "Six Rs" are:

- **Relationship** – at the heart of the Six Rs is the concept of relationships. Meaningful and respectful relationships with young people, families, caregivers, service providers, staff and leaders working in child-, youth- and young adult-serving organizations, Indigenous leaders and Members of the Legislative Assembly are essential for RCY to both understand what is being called for and to inspire and advocate for the changes that will improve the well-being and life outcomes of children, youth and young adults. Relationships are fostered and nurtured through time, presence, listening, compassion, communication and transparency.
- **Respect** – addresses the importance of conveying respect to those RCY serves, our RCY colleagues and our community and government colleagues in such a way that they feel heard and valued, even when there are differences in perspective and difficult conversations are required. It assumes that others are doing the best they can at the time, and that curiosity and openness to understanding is more helpful than judgment and blame.
- **Relevance** – requires RCY to ensure the work that we are doing and the way we are doing it is relevant to the needs and interests of the children, youth and young adults to whom we are accountable. It also requires us to be mindful of the broader context and desire for change held, for example, by government decision-makers or First Nations and Métis communities who are resuming jurisdiction over child and family services.
- **Responsibility** – keeps us focused on the children, youth and young adults who are at the centre of our work and our responsibility to fulfill our legislative mandate. We are also responsible for creating a workplace and relationships that are culturally safe, trauma-aware and restorative, and for setting a clear direction for our work.
- **Reciprocity** – recognizes that for RCY to live into the values of the other Rs, we need to embrace humility, equity and openness. While we have power through our legislative mandate and expertise in a number of areas, there is much that we do not know and must learn in order to be effective. Teaching and learning is a two-way process. Reciprocity entails giving and receiving knowledge, skills, perspectives, stories, time and resources with those with whom we are in relationship.



- *Repair* – this sixth R recognizes that, given the complex and evolving nature and context for our work, we will make mistakes and may inadvertently cause offence or harm. However, we will endeavour to address and repair our mistakes, learn from them and restore the respectful relationships that we aspire to nurture.

### RCY's Values – the Six Rs



### Our Principles – The Four Ps

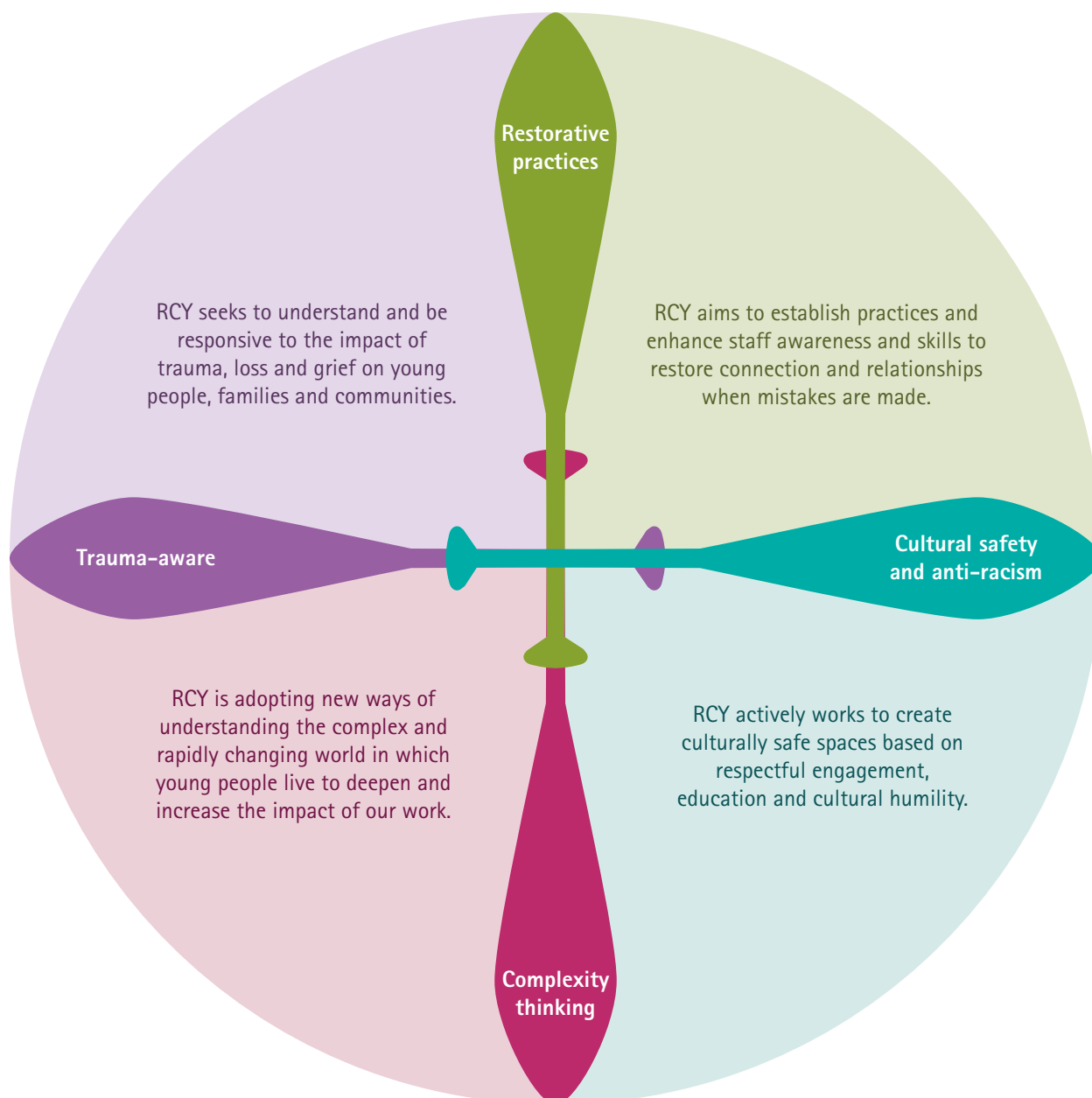
The four principles, or "Four Ps," that inform RCY's policies, practices and ways of being are:

- *Cultural safety and anti-racism* – cultural safety, in RCY's context, is defined as an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in colonial child welfare and health care systems. Cultural safety is fostered through cultural humility – the process of reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. An essential foundation for cultural humility is an understanding of racism and discrimination and how these continue to influence beliefs, assumptions, policies and practices. In this regard, RCY is decolonizing its policies and aligning with *DRIPA*.
- *Trauma-aware* – a trauma-aware approach seeks to understand and be responsive to the impact of trauma, loss and grief on young people, families and communities. Much of RCY's work is rooted in traumatic occurrences. Staff are dealing with difficult and complex situations in which children and youth are experiencing or have experienced harm or death. Understanding the types, levels and impact of individual, collective and intergenerational trauma is essential to both RCY's assessment of the child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems and to fostering a compassionate workplace.
- *Restorative practices* – due to the complex nature and context for our work, and the reality that much of it is rooted in trauma experienced by children, youth and young adults, we will make mistakes and may inadvertently cause offence or harm either to our RCY colleagues or to external partners and colleagues. Learning from the restorative justice movement, RCY aims to establish policies and practices and enhance staff awareness and skills to repair or restore connection and relationships.



- *Complexity thinking* – addressing and influencing the challenges children, youth and young adults face today, and those they will be confronted with in the future requires RCY to adopt new ways of thinking about and understanding the complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world in which young people live. RCY has committed to using insights from the study of complex systems to deepen and increase the impact of our work.

## RCY's Principles – the Four Ps



## Collaborative and Relational Practice

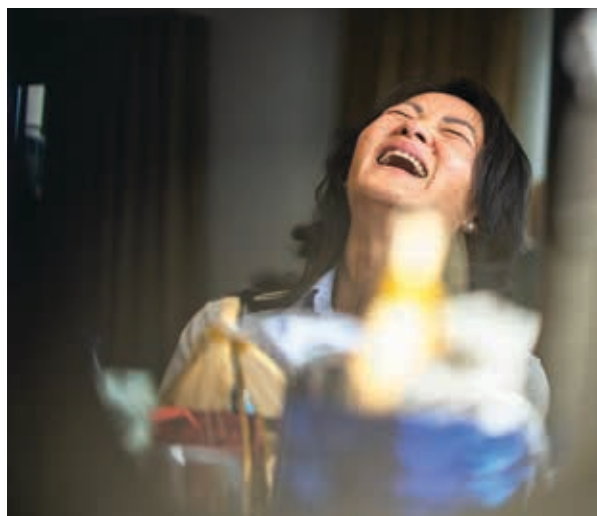
At the heart of the Six Rs – and foundational to all the rest – are Relationships. Although the Six Rs are interlocking and interdependent, the R of Relationships is the bedrock without which the other Rs would not be possible.

Consistent with the 'R' of Relationship, RCY strives to be in relationship with children, youth, young adults and their families, as well as various partners. We are committed to building strong, respectful and reciprocal relationships with many individuals, organizations and networks including Elders and Matriarchs, Knowledge Keepers, leaders in Nation and provincial governments and agencies, researchers, service providers, family members and, of course, young people themselves. These relationships are essential to the Office in mobilizing collective responses to systemic issues in the child- and youth-serving system. The Representative and her staff are committed to listening deeply and with intention to the experiences of those we serve. We are also committed to hearing our partners as we act as a convenor and catalyst to learn about and act upon the systemic issues that create barriers to children, youth and young adults to thrive.

This commitment to collaborative and relational practice is realized through engagement and partnerships with others within the system to effect meaningful and sustainable change in child, youth and young adult services and systems. This includes strengthening relationships and reciprocity with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), Métis Nation BC (MNBC), B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCA AFC), Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs), Indigenous leadership and other Indigenous-led organizations.

RCY's focus on relationships and reciprocity with the ICFSAs – including with the ICFSA Directors Secretariat and the Our Children Our Way Society – helps the Office to understand and better support the evolving Indigenous child welfare landscape. To strengthen this essential relationship, RCY recommended in its April 2022 submission to the SSCCY that amendments be made to the *RCY Act* to provide the Representative with discretion to disclose the results of reviews and investigations directly to the ICFSA responsible for the case in question.

RCY has also over the past year continued to build on its engagement with academic institutions to bring the best current research evidence forward to inform and illuminate RCY priority areas of interest. Examples of this type of collaboration are the research partnerships in place in 2022/23 with academic scholars from University of Ottawa, Concordia University, Simon Fraser University, Thompson Rivers University, University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, University of British Columbia – Okanagan and University of Northern British Columbia, as well as McCreary Centre Society, exploring systemic issues in the child welfare system.



*Participant at RCY's All-Staff meeting, March 2023*



In 2022/23, the Representative introduced a knowledge mobilization initiative designed to more widely disseminate the results of RCY work and research. The focus in 2022/23 was on two key areas: belonging, which built on the 2021 report *Skye's Legacy: A focus on belonging*; and awareness and supports for children and youth with FASD, which built on the 2021 *Excluded* report. The goal of knowledge mobilization is to extend the reach of the Office's work beyond the production and release of a single report or initiative to engage young people, government members and ministry staff, community partners, the media and the public. In 2023/24, RCY will continue to develop videos, web pages, webinars, social media, infographics, visual presentations, statements and public outreach events to foster a greater understanding about positive systemic change for the children, youth and young adults of B.C.

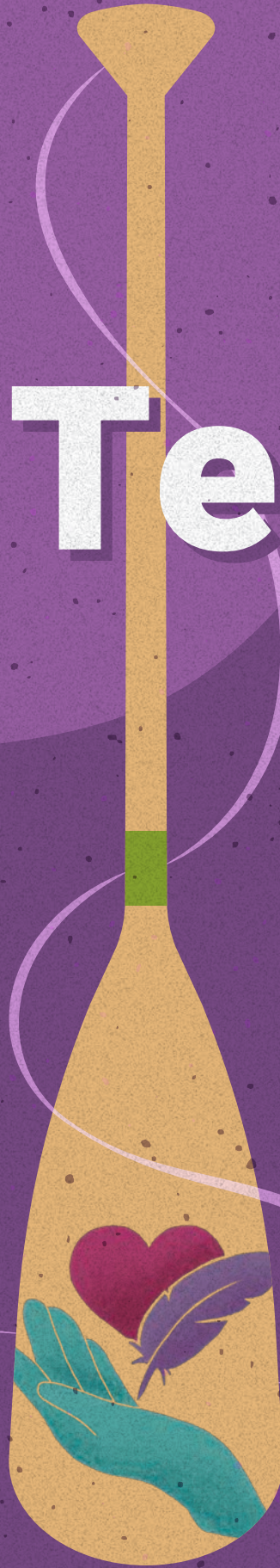
In 2022/23, RCY initiated a broad review and redesign of its diverse communication resources and materials to align with RCY's 6Rs and 4Ps and priorities.



*Our Children, Our Way Conference, November 2022*



# Our Teams



# Office Overview

RCY is committed to continually improving how it is structured and organized to enhance its effectiveness in meeting its mandate, the quality of its work environment and its capacity to undertake its work in an efficient and culturally attuned way.

## Organizational Structure

Complementary to the implementation of the Paddling Forward strategy in 2021/22, RCY refined its organizational structure to better reflect the work of the Office in providing both individual and systemic advocacy, the importance of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous engagement, and to foster cross-team collaboration ensuring that complex issues are addressed in a fulsome way and draw on the expertise and knowledge of all teams.

There are two Deputy Representatives: one responsible for the Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement (IAFNMIE) team and the Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research (SAFNMIR) team; and the other responsible for the Reviews and Investigations team and the Corporate Services team. The Deputies work together to support the Representative and ensure the alignment and coordination of the work of the Office. The Corporate Services team also provides human resources, finance and IT services to the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC). The Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team supports the Representative and the work of all three core program areas.

In 2022/23, RCY had 79 budgeted full-time equivalent staff.

In 2022/23, RCY further refined its organization to ensure the Office has the structure and people to support the effective and efficient delivery of its mandate and programs. Executive leads have been assigned to lead and oversee the work on: the child and youth mental health report series; the children and youth with support needs initiatives; the review of the *RCY Act*; and the review of youth justice services. The assignment of additional Executive leads for other current and future major initiatives is being contemplated. Recruitment was undertaken to staff a new RCY Executive position responsible for providing expert legal, legislative and strategic policy advice to the Office.

In 2022/23, the Office also employed two students on a part-time basis to provide advice based on their lived experience to the Office's work in the areas of substance use and children's rights in family justice matters. There are future plans to hire legal students from the University of Victoria law program to support the development of RCY's legal analysis capacity.





## Work Environment

RCY remains fully committed to providing remote work opportunities, allowing the Office to recruit and employ people from throughout B.C. while enabling them to maintain important relations and community connections. In addition, offering remote work maximizes the accessibility of RCY, allowing the Office to recruit and retain employees with disabilities, who provide essential perspectives.

RCY also maintains two physical office locations – in Victoria and Prince George. Work continues in those locations to develop welcoming, accessible, flexible, multi-purpose office space that all staff – including those working remotely – can use for individual work, collaborative team meetings, staff and community gatherings, and wellness events.



## Capacity and Responsiveness

In 2021/22, RCY established the position of Knowledge Keeper; in 2022/23, this position was renamed Traditional Knowledge Keeper (nogad'ga'leeth). Translated, nogad'ga'leeth means "people come to you because of the knowledge you carry." The Traditional Knowledge Keeper supports all staff to gain the required understanding of the historical and current impacts of colonization and provides guidance and advice to RCY Executive. The Representative and RCY staff are also supported in their work by Elders and Matriarchs.

The Office employs intentional strategies to attract and retain First Nations, Métis and Inuit staff. In 2022/23, 22 per cent of RCY's permanent positions were held by First Nations, Métis, Inuit or Urban Indigenous employees. RCY's goal is to have at least 25 per cent Indigenous staff representation by 2028.

### Evolution of RCY's Traditional Knowledge Keeper

RCY's first Knowledge Keeper, Yuxwelupton, was appointed in 2021/22. Yuxwelupton played an important role in providing guidance on the establishment of an Elders and Matriarch circle in a way consistent with RCY's 6Rs. The Representative, RCY Executive and all staff honour the guidance provided by Yuxwelupton who has now taken on a substantial new role at the Royal British Columbia Museum, while maintaining a connection to and friendship with RCY. In 2022/23, the Knowledge Keeper was renamed Traditional Knowledge Keeper in recognition of the role played in providing guidance and advice to RCY on culturally attuned internal policy and practice. RCY has welcomed Hereditary Chief Wedlidi Speck as its new Traditional Knowledge Keeper.

Recruitment and retention has been challenging due to delays in current approval processes and the widespread competition for talent. In addition, RCY experienced considerable disruption due to ministries offering direct (i.e., non-competitive) short-term (under seven month) temporary assignments (TAs) to RCY staff to address their own workload pressures. As these offers are often accompanied by favourable salary terms and opportunities, RCY supports staff to take on a TA, however, RCY teams are then short-staffed as they try to recruit candidates to fill a short-term temporary position. In response to these challenges, RCY has begun to reimagine how its current recruitment processes could be streamlined and adapted. RCY has also broadened preference statements to attract a more diverse pool of candidates. There is also a strong focus on staff development and retention approaches.



# RCY Teams

RCY's legislative mandates of Advocacy, Reviews and Investigations, and Monitoring are undertaken by the three core program teams of IAFNMIE, Reviews and Investigations, and SAFNMIR, respectively.

These three core-area teams are supported by the Communications and Knowledge Mobilization and Corporate Services teams. All teams work together to achieve RCY's mandate and implement its Paddling Forward strategy.

## Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement (IAFNMIE)

The IAFNMIE team is responsible for two key areas of work at RCY – individual advocacy for children, youth and young adults and outreach and community engagement.

### Individual Advocacy

B.C.'s child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems are complex. It can be challenging for individuals or families to identify, access and receive services. The Representative's individual 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 between their 19<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays who are eligible to receive services from CLBC, and
- young adults up to their 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays who:
  - are on, or eligible for, an AYA
  - are on, or eligible for, a tuition waiver (TWP).

RCY advocacy staff provide advice and insight about how to access and navigate services. They also provide education about applicable rights and services, provide coaching, attend meetings with or on behalf of children, youth and young adults, and engage with multiple levels of decision-makers to support good outcomes and uphold young peoples' rights. The work is often complex and nuanced and requires strong communication, mediation, conflict resolution, negotiation and advocacy skills.

**Designated services** mean any of the following services or programs for children and their families provided under an enactment or provided or funded by the government:

- (a) services or programs under the *Adoption Act*, the *Child Care BC Act*, the *Child Care Subsidy Act*, the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, the *Community Living Authority Act* and the *Youth Justice Act*
- (b) early childhood development and child care services
- (c) mental health services for children
- (d) addiction services for children
- (e) services for youth during their transition to adulthood
- (f) additional services or programs that are prescribed under section 29 (2) (a) of the *RCY Act*.



Many of those contacting the Representative's advocacy team are assisted at the initial intake stage by an Intake Advocate 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 social worker or service provider, resolve an issue, or access a complaints process. Often, Intake Advocates support individuals with ongoing information and coaching in effective self-advocacy to ensure that their concerns are addressed and dealt with appropriately. In many instances, this is all the support that is needed. However, should a caller's situation require ongoing support, an Intake Advocate will refer the file to an RCY Advocate for additional follow-up.

If a file is referred to an Advocate, the Advocate will connect with relevant people involved, including the child, youth or young adult, to develop an advocacy plan. Once the Advocate completes these steps, they have a strong understanding of the advocacy issues and the Advocate will work with all involved to highlight the young person's rights, views and/or best interests throughout the process. The Advocate works to ensure a young person's views and rights are fully understood and considered in decision-making. The goal is to improve the experience and outcomes for young people and to help ensure they have access to the quality services to which they are entitled.

### *Trends*

In the 2022/23 fiscal year, RCY's Advocacy team received an average of 133 requests for advocacy per month – totaling 1,594 requests from the public by phone, email and chat/text. From those requests, 1,963 issues were identified that required assessment, information, advice and/or support and 1,155 advocacy files were opened (each file opened can include multiple children and multiple issues – see note below). The total number of issues captured in all files this past fiscal year was two per cent higher than last year. Within the 1,155 files opened, 1,492 children, youth and young adults were served. Of those served, 55 per cent were of First Nations, Métis or Inuit heritage.

#### *Explanatory note regarding individual advocacy data collection:*

As noted in last year's RCY Annual Report and Service Plan, the Advocacy team continues to work with a revamped data and case management system. RCY's practice evolved, particularly between 2013 and 2017, in how it records and manages data on services provided by the Advocacy team to children, youth and young adults. The practice had been to open a separate file for each individual child, youth or young adult, even in the case of sibling groups, and also to open a separate file for each issue impacting the child, youth or young adult. This sometimes resulted in multiple files for a family and multiple files for a young person, which was not the most effective way to understand their story over time and was also an administrative burden. RCY's current practice is more person-focused and administratively lean. The Advocacy team is now able to enter more than one child, youth or young adult per file regarding sibling groups, and is able to associate specific issues to each individual child, youth or young adult within that file over time.



### RCY Advocacy Case Example

*Tasha's story illustrates how RCY Advocates can help uphold the rights and views of children:*

RCY was contacted by a service provider with concerns about Tasha, who is a 10-year-old child with significant medical and developmental support needs.

Tasha is kind-hearted and enjoys the outdoors and community outings. She is on a Special Needs Agreement with MCFD. Tasha requires 24/7 intensive support including service coordination for nursing, occupational, speech and physical therapy. It has been particularly difficult to arrange for consistent nursing support services to assist Tasha at school and in the home due to nursing shortages and policy and funding barriers.

The level of support Tasha required resulted in MCFD being unable to secure a care home in her community. Tasha spent months in hospital and then had to move out of her community in order to receive ongoing care. Communication between the multiple service providers and people involved across the two communities was breaking down. There was concern from the caller to RCY that the frustrations and challenges being experienced within the care team would result in Tasha not returning to her home community.

With an RCY Advocate's involvement, regular care team meetings intensified and the team was better able to coordinate by meeting more frequently and working toward the common goal of having Tasha closer to family. The Advocate consistently raised Tasha's *UNCRC* Article 12 right to express her views and have them considered in planning – in this case, her desire to reside in the same community as her family. After several months of planning and support from MCFD local leadership, Tasha was able to move closer to her family and receive the services she needed through a specialized residential resource contract.

Approximately 44 per cent of intake files created in 2022/23 (1,155 files) were forwarded to an Advocate for deeper assessment and/or further advocacy. It is important to note that the percentage of files assigned to Advocates continues to increase. Issues noted at intake as being in-mandate also increased from 2021/22 by almost 10 per cent (1,752). While overall case numbers and requests are lower, how RCY gathers information and supports young people and their caregivers continues to evolve. The requests received are more often referred for more comprehensive advocacy involvement and require more time and support than in previous years.



*Photo by Aaraksh Siwakoti*



The bulk of RCY's advocacy work remains focused on designated services that are connected to child welfare (82 per cent), with 67 per cent (880) involving MCFD and 15 per cent (193) involving an ICfSA. Four per cent of issues (49) are CLBC-related, reflecting a doubling of involvement from the 2021/22 fiscal year to 2022/23. However, issues related to provincial and regional health authorities account for just 1.6 per cent of issues (21).<sup>4</sup>

The top five most frequent service areas in RCY's advocacy work during the last fiscal year included child protection, guardianship, youth services, family support and residential resources.

Within these service areas, the top three issues or areas of concern at the RCY advocacy intake stage in 2022/23 were:

#### Top three issues at Advocacy Intake stage:

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| • Ineffective planning/supports                 | 21 per cent |
| • Disagreement with or concern about a decision | 20 per cent |
| • Information requests                          | 17 per cent |

Additional issues raised at the intake stage include the following:

- Respectful Engagement 8 per cent
- Family Access 7 per cent
- Basic needs not met 5 per cent

When issues were assigned for a deeper assessment and advocacy support, the top two issues were the same, but their relative importance changed and the third issue at the intake stage – information requests – dropped off, replaced by the issue of basic needs not being met:

#### Top three issues at Advocacy assessment and support stage:

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| • Ineffective planning/supports                 | 30 per cent |
| • Disagreement with or concern about a decision | 16 per cent |
| • Basic needs not met                           | 9 per cent  |

<sup>4</sup> This is a much smaller number than RCY would expect to see given that the health authorities are responsible for delivering or funding some mental health and all substance use services for children and youth and that RCY consistently sees the impact of mental health and addictions concerns on the well-being of young people. It is likely that health authority staff do not provide information to young people and families about RCY as consistently as MCFD and the ICfSAs do as there is no requirement for them to apprise young people of their right to independent advocacy services and there remains a lack of awareness and understanding about RCY within the health authorities.



Other issues represented at all stages of Advocacy include:

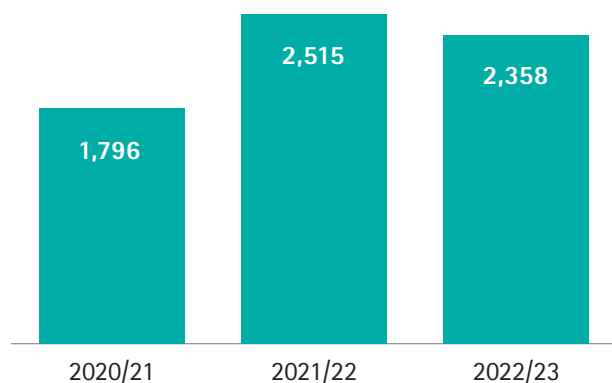
- participation for young people
- issues with residential resources
- placement instability
- permanency planning
- conflict between service providers
- waitlists
- funding delays.

Cultural support planning also presents for children and youth in care on a regular basis. This issue is often overshadowed by crisis responses and is underutilized as a strategy for stabilization and well-being.

### Complexity

In 2022/23, the complexity of RCY advocacy files continued to increase and Advocates spent significant time in case meetings. Figure 3 shows the total hours spent by Advocates in either in-person or virtual meetings for the past three fiscal years.

**Figure 3 – Hours Spent by Advocates in Meetings Overs Past Three Years**



This additional time reflects the need for Advocates to address multiple service streams and challenges when it comes to the system meeting unique needs of children, youth, young adults and their families. Often, children, youth and young adults require an array of simultaneous and coordinated supports (e.g., services for support needs and mental health) and – in circumstances where families are unable or are struggling to care for their loved one in the family home – residential services. Such complex situations require more frequent communication and meetings to resolve the issues.

The average number of months that RCY advocacy files remained in "active" status increased slightly, from seven months in 2021/22 to 7.5 months, and there was a significant increase in the number of files remaining open between nine and 18 months. For fiscal year 2022/23:

- 46 percent of files remained open under 3 months, compared to 45 per cent last fiscal
- 24 per cent of files remained open between three and six months, compared to 25 per cent last fiscal
- 10 per cent of files remained open between six and nine months, compared to 13 per cent last fiscal
- 12 per cent of files remained open between nine and 18 months, compared to 8 per cent last fiscal
- 7.5 per cent of files remained open for more than 18 months, compared to 9.4 per cent last fiscal.

See Appendix 1 for more detailed data tables on Advocacy statistics and trends during 2022/23.



## RCY Advocacy Case Example

*Jamie's story illustrates how an RCY Advocate can assist youth with complex needs:*

Jamie's parents reached out to RCY seeking assistance with support services for their child who is transgender and has multiple complex needs. Jamie is a bright youth who enjoys spending time with their friends and watching movies. They have recently been diagnosed with autism and are struggling with their mental health.

Over the past year, Jamie has been in and out of hospital due to suicide attempts and aggressive outbursts. MCFD family support services, CYSN, CYMH and CLBC had been meeting to discuss planning, but communication was fragmented due to ongoing crises involving Jamie. When they called RCY, the family was exhausted and in need of support.

Jamie had been on a Voluntary Care Agreement for six months as the family was unable to meet Jamie's needs and ensure the safety of other children in the home. The family was unclear about the roles and responsibilities of each service stream working with Jamie. Of significant concern was that Jamie would be turning 19 within six months and CLBC had only just been notified. Adult mental health services also needed to be part of planning as CLBC had noted that it would be unable to support Jamie's high mental health needs.

Jamie was adamant that they did not wish to return to the family home and wanted to live independently with support. The RCY Advocate supported Jamie by highlighting their rights under the *UNCRPD*, specifically the rights of a person with disabilities to choose where they live and to have access to supports.

The RCY Advocate was able to help the family better understand each service provider's role and what was reasonable for them to expect in terms of service. Over time, Jamie agreed to meet with the Advocate and share their views on how they could best be supported. One of the challenges was that Jamie and their family did not fully agree on what was required.

The Advocate encouraged CYSN to bring on a behavioural consultant to assess Jamie's support needs and to create a behavioural plan. This plan incorporated previous psychiatric recommendations and informed CLBC planning. A community care plan was created and shared with all relevant service providers in collaboration with Jamie and their family.

CLBC was unable to secure a supportive housing situation for Jamie in time for their 19th birthday, and the Advocate brought forward the shared protocol for transition planning to encourage alternative planning. As a result, MCFD continued to support Jamie in their current placement for an additional three months. CYMH also continued to support Jamie after their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday because Jamie's home community had a wait list for adult mental health supports.



When Jamie continued to arrive in the local hospital emergency room, hospital responses were inconsistent despite the shared community plan. This was in large part due to understaffing and lack of capacity within the system. The Advocate elevated concerns within the health system. As a result, information sharing was improved within the hospital and across the care team.

After several months, CLBC was able to provide a home for Jamie with support from adult mental health services. It took over a year for Jamie to settle into the new home and for their situation to begin to stabilize.

## Outreach and Engagement

The IAFNMIE team is also responsible for undertaking broad outreach and engagement activities. The goal is to enhance awareness about RCY and young peoples' rights under various rights instruments such as the *UNCRC*, the *UNCRPD* and *UNDRIP*, as well as s.70 rights under the *CFCS Act*.

RCY's outreach and community engagement team has two primary purposes:

- to ensure that young people know about and can access services and supports when they need them
- to improve the public understanding of the experiences and rights of children, youth and young adults in B.C.

RCY's outreach and community engagement staff and Advocates are a vital link to young people and the adults, services and communities that are important to them. The work of these staff members includes:

- facilitating culturally relevant workshops, rights education sessions and self-advocacy training
- raising awareness about children's rights, young peoples' issues, and when and where to ask for help
- fostering relationships between RCY and those who interact with young people, including members of Indigenous communities, representatives of MCFD, CLBC, ICFSAs, and non-profit and community organizations.

Following the impact of COVID-19, and the resulting restriction on engaging directly with youth and communities, IAFNMIE is rebuilding its youth and community engagement team and plans to embark on a comprehensive process to renew its engagement approach and strategy.

Given the over-involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of Indigenous children and families and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action*, RCY places an intentional focus on reaching out to, and building collaborative relationships with, First Nations, Métis and Urban Indigenous communities and organizations. The team strives to develop relationships that support organizations to build their own advocacy capacity and that of the young people they serve.



## RCY Advocacy Case Example

*Tanner's story illustrates how RCY Advocates can help young people with complex needs to be heard and to ensure their rights are respected:*

Tanner is a generous young person who loves swimming, animals and spending time with his sibling. He reached out to RCY for help in working with MCFD so that he could get the kinds of supports that work for him.

When Tanner called RCY, he was in continuing care of the government but had been living outside of a care home for some time as he found that the placements offered by MCFD did not meet his needs. These homes were not near his First Nations community and were unable to offer harm reduction strategies for his substance use. This resulted in Tanner becoming homeless and actively using substances with no support.

The ministry struggled to find a placement for him due to a lack of available homes and staffing in or near his rural community. As with many young people, Tanner did not want to leave his community. An RCY Advocate supported Tanner by reminding the care team of his rights to belong to his community as per the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*, Article 9, as well as his United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 right to have his views considered in decisions.

The Advocate helped Tanner to share his views so that MCFD fully considered his rights and needs. Regular case meetings for Tanner began to occur along with efforts to engage with – and increase safety for – Tanner in a way that respected his views and experiences. RCY's Advocate walked alongside Tanner through these processes to ensure his needs were centred. Temporary housing was secured and support put in place once Tanner agreed to work with the care team. In order to be able to do that, Tanner first needed to feel heard and be assured that the care team was willing to "meet him where he was."

After several months, MCFD developed a long-term placement to meet Tanner's unique needs. Typically, young people using substances are not able to keep substances or related items on site. The care team worked with Tanner to create accessible, secure and safe storage of substances near his home. This ensured that substance storage would not be a barrier to him staying at his placement. The care team also ensured that Tanner had access to a substance use counsellor as well as outreach and support to encourage harm reduction.

The care team was able to take a creative approach with Tanner that encouraged him to remain connected to supports and slowly build on his strengths so that he was in a better place to manage his substance use. In addition, Tanner's First Nation community was able to remain more involved and supportive due to his proximity. This was an important cultural piece for Tanner as he worked toward improving his health. The RCY Advocate was able to support Tanner throughout the entire process and encourage him to engage in conversations toward solutions that worked for him.

[https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

<https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text#>



## Reviews and Investigations

RCY's Reviews and Investigations team is responsible for reviewing, investigating and reporting on critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving *reviewable services*. Reviewable services are services or programs under the *CFCS Act* and the *Youth Justice Act* and include:

- child welfare
- addiction services for children
- mental health services for children
- youth justice services.<sup>5</sup>

Public bodies delivering reviewable services are required to report to the Representative the critical injury or death of a child if the child or family was receiving services at the time of, or in the year prior to, the injury or death. This is known as a Reportable Circumstance (RC). Currently, the public bodies delivering reviewable services include MCFD, ICFSAs and health authorities. MCFD submits RCs for its reviewable services and also submits RCs received from ICFSAs. To date, the Ministry of Health and health authorities have not complied with the legal requirement to report the critical injury or death of children receiving reviewable services.<sup>6</sup>

All injury and death reports received by RCY are reviewed to identify whether they meet the statutory mandate of the Office and whether the reviewable services involved may have been a factor in the death or critical injury. The Reviews and Investigations team receives and reviews an average of about 400 RCs each month with the goal of understanding and documenting each young person's story in a way that honours their experience and helps to inform individual and systemic change.

### Fast Fact

In 2022, RCY received reports of 145 children who experienced an emotional harm injury due to the loss of at least one parent, sibling or significant caregiver in their lives to the toxic drug crisis.

**Source:** Reviews and Investigations, In-Mandate Reportable Circumstances



Photo by Aaraksh Siwakoti

<sup>5</sup> Both services under the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and the Child in the Home of a Relative Program are prescribed as reviewable services.

<sup>6</sup> Reviewable services are defined in s.1 of the *RCY Act* as "services and programs under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* or the *Youth Justice Act* and mental health and addiction services." The Ministry of Health and Health Authorities provide some of the mental health and addiction services in B.C. that are available to children and youth. RCY has been working with the Ministry of Health and health authorities to ensure compliance with the requirement to submit RCs but this was put on hold over the past few years due to COVID-19. RCY is re-engaging with the Ministry of Health and health authorities to encourage and enable reporting compliance.



Specific functions of the Reviews and Investigations team include:

- examining trends and patterns emerging from the hundreds of RCs reviewed each month
- referring a child or youth to the RCY Advocacy team if there are indications a child or youth is not receiving the supports they need
- referring urgent cases of concern to MCFD when there are issues regarding the immediate safety and well-being of a child or youth who is receiving a reviewable service. A case of concern referral is made through the Provincial Director of Child Welfare, requesting an assessment of whether planning in a local service delivery area (SDA) is adequate
- preparing a priority briefing note for the Representative if a case of a child or youth experiencing severe abuse or neglect is being covered in the media
- preparing priority briefing notes for the Representative when a particularly egregious or urgent situation has come to the attention of RCY analysts that should not wait until the monthly review meetings held with the Representative and Executive members
- preparing briefing notes that include detailed information for RCY Executive to assess whether a comprehensive review should be written and may inform RCY strategic priorities or projects
- researching and preparing comprehensive reviews to provide the Representative with the information required to determine whether an investigation should be launched. Comprehensive reviews often take months to complete as all services provided to a child or youth over their lifetime are reviewed and cross-referenced with policy and best practices
- where the analysis of comprehensive reviews reveals a consistent pattern of experiences for children and youth, bringing together several reviews into an aggregate review which may be released in a public report or brought forward to government decision-makers
- investigating a critical injury or death of a child and preparing an investigative report.

The Reviews and Investigations team also supports the collective work of RCY in meeting its mandate and works closely with other program areas and teams. This includes, as noted above, the internal referral of cases to RCY's IAFNMIE team when there is an indication that a child, youth or young adult may require advocacy services, as well as working with the team in the identification and analysis of trends and emerging issues that are negatively impacting children and youth.

In 2022/23, the Reviews and Investigations team received 4,667 RCs, of which 50 per cent fell within RCY's mandate. Of note, Indigenous children and youth were over-represented in RCs. This is consistent with the over-involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of Indigenous children and youth.

Of the 2,353 RCs within RCY's mandate, 11 were taken to the comprehensive review stage in 2022/23. The team also prepared 18 briefing notes and is in the process of conducting one investigation and preparing two aggregate reports.

See Appendix 1 for detailed data tables on Reviews and Investigations cases and trends during 2022/23.



### What is a Comprehensive Review?

When a child or youth receiving reviewable services is critically injured or dies and there appears to be a strong connection between the services received or not received and the injury or death, RCY may undertake a comprehensive review. A comprehensive review is meant to gain an understanding of the child's experience with the systems of service, where gaps may have occurred, and where meaningful changes could be made to the way services are delivered.

To complete a comprehensive review, a child's records are gathered and documented into a chronology. The chronology contextualizes the child's social conditions – their race, culture, gender, and familial history, especially where it intersects with colonial systems of oppression – in order to understand how the system's involvement, or lack of involvement, in their lives may have contributed to the injury or fatality. This chronology includes a detailed analysis of relevant legal frameworks, accompanying policies, practice standards, media and the influence of current trends such as COVID-19, the toxic drug crisis and gang-related violence.

Comprehensive reviews are presented to RCY's Executive team with the intention of highlighting recurring circumstances or trends, improvements to reviewable services, and to inform the need for broadened policy initiatives. Additionally, the Reviews and Investigations team may undertake a post-comprehensive review process with the public body responsible for the reviewable service. Comprehensive reviews may also be aggregated to identify and analyze recurring circumstances or trends with the aim of recommending improvements to reviewable services and also informing the Representative's decision about whether or not to conduct an investigation.

### RCY Comprehensive Review – a Summarized Example

*The following has been anonymized to protect confidentiality:*

Raleigh was the first-born child of Sharon, who longed for a better life for her children than she had experienced herself. Raleigh was brought up in a multi-generational home in which care for Raleigh and her sibling was shared between Sharon and her extended family. Raleigh and Sharon had a deep bond. The family relocated to B.C. from another province and MCFD became involved when a report was made that pre-teen Raleigh had been sexually assaulted by a teenage male.

Prior to this report, Raleigh had gone missing from her home for lengthy periods, and experienced suicidality and incidents of sexualized exploitation by a teenage male and an adult male – all within a relatively short period of time.

Sharon had also experienced physical and sexual violence by adult males throughout her own childhood and adolescence. Undoubtedly, seeing her child be victimized added to the trauma that Sharon experienced. In response to past and ongoing experiences and unresolved trauma, Sharon's mental health declined, and she increasingly turned to substances to cope and was



less able to meet the needs of her children. In response, MCFD became increasingly involved in safety planning with Sharon and her extended family. Eventually, a court order was obtained that prohibited Sharon from residing in the family home. Raleigh was left in the care of family members who were unable to keep her safe from further abuse.

The decision to prohibit Sharon from living in the family home and restricting contact between her and Raleigh disrupted Raleigh's sense of belonging and safety. Sharon continued to make efforts to keep Raleigh safe despite living outside of the home, however family members and MCFD did not support Sharon's efforts. Raleigh continuously expressed the desire for her mother to come home and would actively seek her out. Although she was struggling with her own mental health and substance use challenges, Sharon made efforts to maintain a sense of connection with Raleigh and her siblings.

Raleigh began to use substances herself as a response to the violence and exploitation she continued to experience. Shortly after her mother was forced to leave the family home, Raleigh was hospitalized after ingesting a significant number of over-the-counter pills in an attempted suicide. Following her discharge from hospital, her suicidality and substance use increased despite numerous community-based support service referrals.

Raleigh also disclosed multiple episodes of violence but did not receive the support she needed from community professionals. She was described by a service provider as being "involved" in the sex trade which is an inappropriate description given her young age and vulnerability. Raleigh was referred to various services supporting youth who are identified as "high-risk" due to substance use and experiences of violence and she was encouraged to access harm reduction services and safe consumption spaces. However, due to the lack of youth-focused harm reduction supports and services available in her urban community, only adult sites were available and because Raleigh was under 19 years of age, she was not allowed access to these services.

Shortly after her birthday, Raleigh was found unresponsive. Emergency services were called and it was determined that Raleigh had died by drug poisoning/overdose the previous evening.

Raleigh and her family were deeply impacted by the systems involved in her life, as well as the lack of age-appropriate substance use services including harm-reduction strategies for children Raleigh's age. As well, the disruption of the relationship between Raleigh and her mother appears to have been correlated with increases in her substance use and suicidality. It appears that Raleigh's voice was not being heard as she raised concerns about separation and her unmet needs. As RCY honours the stories of Raleigh and Sharon, the Office is reminded of *Skye's Legacy* and what was learned about the danger and harms caused when belonging and connection are disrupted for children and families and how this disruption can influence the well-being of all family members.



### RCY teams working together in advocacy – an example

*The following illustrates how the IAFNMIE and Reviews and Investigations teams worked together to ensure that a youth's mental health needs were better met:*

After receiving several reportable circumstances related to Mandi, RCY's Reviews and Investigations team referred the situation to the Advocacy team.

Mandi is a young person who enjoys spending time with her siblings and is a talented artist. At the time of referral to Advocacy, it appeared that Mandi's placement was about to break down and that support services were insufficient. Mandi was managing significant mental health challenges and experiencing chronic suicidal thoughts and attempts. Mandi's family and care team were constantly responding to crises.

Mandi had been on a Voluntary Care Agreement for some time, but the family eventually ended this agreement as it did not seem to be improving Mandi's well-being. For a period following this, Mandi and her family were not provided any services. RCY's Reviews and Investigations team received critical injury reports for Mandi and became concerned about her well-being and the apparent lack of child- and family-focused services and supports. They referred her file to Advocacy, and also sent a summary of the situation to MCFD to raise awareness within the ministry and ensure that her local care team had sufficient support to develop an effective plan.

Part of the challenge was that the therapy and outpatient psychiatry services Mandi required were not available in her community and inpatient facilities would not accept her. Mandi's RCY Advocate highlighted *UNCRC* Article 18 (2), which stipulates that parents should have the required assistance to parent, as well as Article 24, which speaks to access to health and rehabilitative supports.

The Advocate continued to attend regular care team meetings and encouraged collaboration between all involved service providers, provided advice to the family in relation to navigating services and supported Mandi to ensure her views were centred in planning on an ongoing basis. Unfortunately, there are little to no wraparound services for youth and their families who are struggling to manage mental health challenges. As a result, the Advocate encouraged out-of-the-box thinking in terms of how to better support Mandi in her home. With the ongoing involvement of the RCY Advocate, MCFD subsequently recruited skilled support workers to work with Mandi in the family home. In addition, health services were able to identify and provide skilled mental health staff to provide structured intervention that also offered some respite for the family. This was a unique arrangement that worked well for Mandi and her family. While this service was unfortunately not provided long-term, it did help create a period of stability resulting in a significant reduction in crises for Mandi and some hope for her and her family.



## Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research (SAFNMIR)

The SAFNMIR team is responsible for identifying common challenges, barriers or gaps in the system of services for children, youth and their families and for advocating for long-term changes in policy, practice and legislation to improve outcomes and well-being of children and youth who access these designated services.

Systemic advocacy issues are identified in three ways:

- regular review of individual advocacy concerns and RCs brought forward to the Representative and analysis of the systemic patterns and trends that these reveal
- ongoing monitoring of the current state – and possible future states – of child and youth needs and services in B.C. and in Canada through review of diverse data sources, research and the assessment of progress and impact of the adoption by public bodies of recommendations of the Representative for changes to policy, practice and legislation
- engagement with children, youth, young adults and families, service providers, researchers, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, partners and leaders and members of the Legislative Assembly.

### What is a systemic issue?

A systemic issue is a problem that has the potential to have negative effects across the child- and youth-serving system. Systemic issues are complex, involving many interconnected ministries or service lines, and reflect the dynamic interplay between ever-changing policy, practice and service delivery conditions. When a systemic issue is identified by the Representative, the SAFNMIR team conducts research and policy analysis along with engagements to explore the issue and determine if ongoing monitoring is required.

An example of a systemic issue that RCY is currently monitoring is the recruitment and retention of B.C.'s child welfare workforce as it relates to service provision and quality of care. Workforce shortages are regularly identified by RCY as a problem impacting the experiences of children and youth in the child welfare system. In March 2023, MCFD reported a five-year decrease of 132 child protection staff, or 11.6 per cent of its workforce, between 2019 and 2023. These staffing shortages contribute to caseload increases, compliance issues and workload pressures for staff and ultimately compromise the quality of care provided to children, youth, young adults and their families.



Once identified, SAFNMIR examines the systemic issue and its impact on children and youth through policy review and data analysis, research, further inquiry and consultation with other RCY programs and partners.

Following this analysis, SAFNMIR may recommend that the Representative take further action that could include:

- further engagement, particularly with children, youth, families and front-line service providers, to develop a deeper understanding of the issues, needs and options
- sharing information and data with service providers and decision-makers to inform systems directions and decisions as well as undertaking knowledge mobilization activities to help raise awareness and cultivate collective action
- serving as host and convenor to bring people and organizations with diverse experiences, perspectives and ideas together to inform systemic action
- making recommendations to government for new or improved legislation, policy and/or practice standards that may be done through public reports, statements or presentations to legislative committees and policy-makers.

In 2022/23, SAFNMIR completed 25 information requests to public bodies to monitor current and future designated services.<sup>7</sup> It contributed to RCY reviews on quality in-care planning and improving mental health outcomes of children in care and children and youth with support needs. The team also continued its work on monitoring recommendations and knowledge mobilization from RCY's April 2021 report on FASD, *Excluded: Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and their Families*. Activities included preparing an illustrated summary of the report with suggested helpful practices for use by service providers, educators, family members and others who want to more effectively support young people with FASD. Also, in fall 2022, the team began extensive monitoring of missing children and youth in government care as they worked toward releasing RCY's first-ever public issues brief on that subject.

The SAFNMIR team is currently focused on expanding systemic monitoring activities and systemic advocacy efforts to reflect a comprehensive understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of the systems of care for children and youth in B.C. The team is planning accountability reports, systemic issues briefs, comprehensive research reports and more research collaborations to identify promising practice. A key foundation for this work is to continue to expand close working relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders and Matriarchs and with youth in care themselves to ensure that SAFNMIR's work is grounded in the wisdom of Knowledge Keepers and the lived experiences of children and youth in the system.

### Fast Fact

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disabilities in the Western world affecting many people in our communities and yet it remains a highly misunderstood, multi-faceted brain and body disability.

**Source:** RCY, September 2022, *Hands, not Hurdles: Helping Children with FASD and their Families*

<sup>7</sup> Under s.10 of the RCY Act, the Representative has the right to any information in the custody or control of a public body.



SAFNMIR – along with other RCY teams – continues to collaborate with research and academic partners to ensure that broader evidence and knowledge is integrated into the insights gained through RCY's Individual Advocacy, Reviews and Investigations and Systemic Advocacy work. In 2022/23, SAFNMIR collaborated in research partnerships with Elder Audrey Lundquist and academic scholars Dr. Natalie Clarke (Thompson Rivers University), Dr. Catherine Richardson (Concordia University), Dr. Fred Chou and Dr. Tim Black (University of Victoria). These collaborations explored systemic violence and harm experienced by girls in the child welfare system, Indigenous perspectives on mental health and wellness, and trauma-informed child welfare systems for children who have experienced developmental trauma. This work will inform RCY's advocacy work as well as future public reports.

### Fast Fact

Services for Indigenous children and families have too often not been tailored to their needs and have mostly been delivered by mainstream service providers using Western modalities of care. More program development and evaluation, led or co-led by Indigenous peoples themselves, is needed to identify the services and programs that are most effective for Indigenous children in care, and Indigenous children generally.

**Source:** RCY, September 2022, *A Parent's Responsibility: Government's obligation to improve the mental health outcomes of children in care*

### Collaborative Initiative

#### *Elder and Hereditary Chief Audrey Lundquist supporting SAFNMIR*

In 2021/22, RCY's SAFNMIR team was formed through bringing together the former Monitoring and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research teams. Over the past year, the team has developed its vision on how to lead systemic advocacy activities alongside subject matter experts, community partners, families, Nations and youth with lived experience of B.C.'s care system.

Central to this vision is RCY's commitment to decolonizing its ways of knowing and being through experiential learning and wise practice. In 2022/23, to support the team's journey, Gitxsan Hereditary Chief Audrey Lundquist was invited to advise and guide the work and development of the SAFNMIR team.

Chief Audrey has supported the ceremony and research design for projects studying girls' experiences in the system of care and children and youth who are lost or missing. Her generous sharing of culturally wise practice and traditional family systems from her Gitxsan culture has enriched the work of the team, along with her mentorship and investment in team members' personal and professional development. The collaboration with Chief Audrey has taught the SAFNMIR team about how to host Knowledge Keepers and Elders in a good way that ensures that the role and inherent rights of Elders and Matriarchs to guide RCY's work for children and youth are honoured and upheld.



SAFNMIR is also responsible for evaluating government's implementation of recommendations made by the Representative. In 2022/23, SAFNMIR implemented an enhanced process for monitoring progress by public bodies on implementing RCY recommendations. SAFNMIR produced and publicly released RCY's first annual monitoring report, assessing progress by public bodies across a number of RCY special reports. In addition to assessing progress on specific recommendations, the team identified variables that contributed to higher levels of follow-through and the systemic and structural barriers that impeded progress. The team also completed eight monitoring reports assessing 63 RCY recommendations. Monitoring reports include an assessment of progress reported by public bodies toward the implementation of action plans to address recommendations made by RCY.

## Communications and Knowledge Mobilization

RCY's Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team provides a variety of supports to the Representative and the entire Office by handling both external and internal communications. The team also leads the Representative's knowledge mobilization initiative, extending the reach of RCY reports and initiatives, and educating the public, government staff, decision-makers and others on report insights, findings and recommendations.

A key function of this team is to help build awareness about the work of the Office throughout B.C. This includes responding to requests from journalists and organizing report releases and media events. It also includes managing six social media accounts, the RCY website and video production.

The Communications and Knowledge Mobilization 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.

Communications staff also prepare materials for the Representative's appearances before government committees, including SSCCY and SSCFGS, as well as speeches, visual presentations and background materials for the Representative's public engagements.





*Representative Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, Chief Coroner Lisa Lapointe, Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry and Deputy Chief Medical Health Officer, First Nations Health Authority, Dr. Kelsey Louie at a media conference on the toxic drug supply, June 2023*

## Corporate Services

RCY's Corporate Services team is an essential backbone for the Office: the services provided and the work done on behalf of front-facing staff are key enabling mechanisms. Corporate services comprise finance, human resources (HR), administration, records coordination, project coordination, information management and technology (IMIT) and privacy support services for RCY.

Some Corporate Services – finance, HR and IMIT – are also provided to the Office of the B.C. Human Rights Commissioner under a shared services agreement.



# Our Achievements



# Key Activities and Initiatives

The core work of RCY's IAFNMIR, Reviews and Investigations and SAFNMIR teams – supported by the Communications and Knowledge Mobilization and Corporate Services teams – enables the Office to meet its mandate. That core work also informs key activities and initiatives that RCY undertakes as a whole to address its strategic priorities.



*Representative Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth and an RCY Advocate meet with members of the Simpcw First Nation, May 2023*



# Paddling Together

## Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement

- Advocates for children, youth and young adults
- Engages with children, youth, young adults and communities
- Spreads awareness of the rights of children, youth and young adults
- Analyzes trends and issues in RCY Advocacy cases
- Prepares briefing materials for Executive and Representative
- Prepares special reports on advocacy trends

## Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research

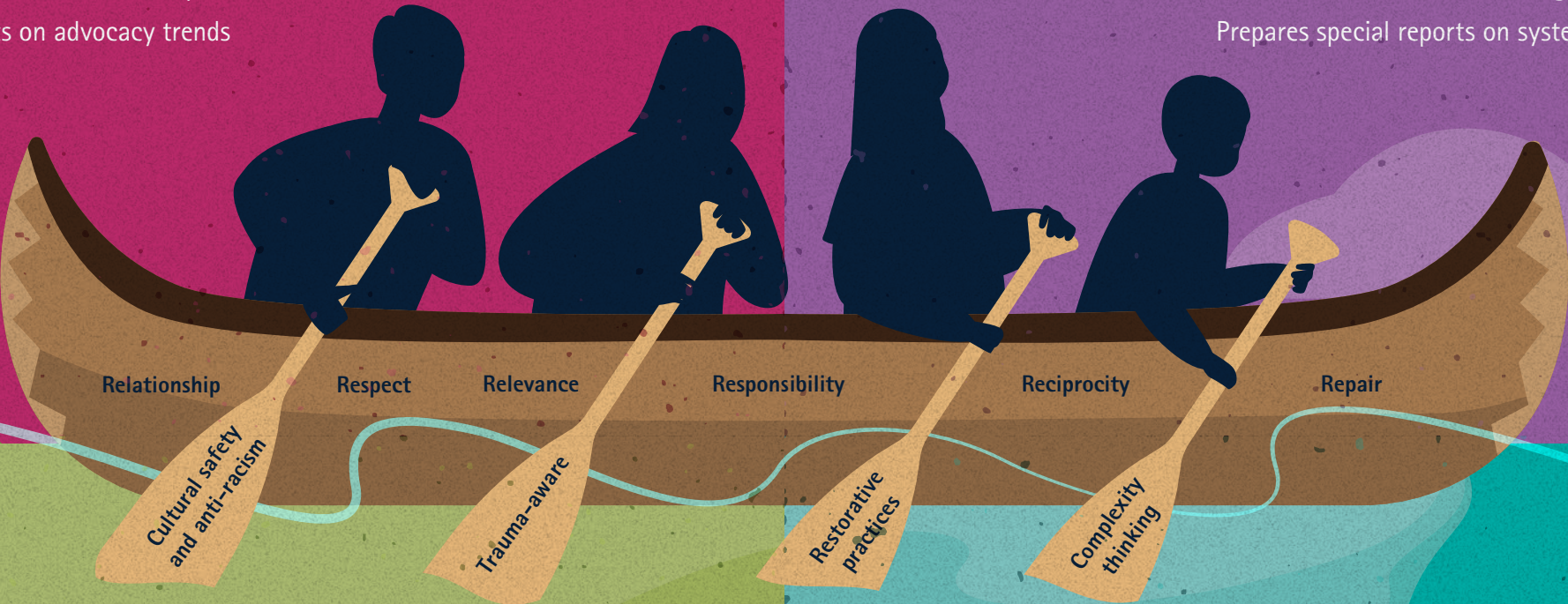
- Monitors trends and issues in child- and youth-serving systems
- Monitors progress on RCY recommendations
- Manages formal information requests to public bodies on behalf of all teams
- Prepares briefing materials for Executive and Representative
- Advises all teams on research design and Indigenous Research Methods
- Prepares special reports on systemic issues under s.20 of RCY Act

### Methods

- Media/Social Media
- Presentations
- Youth and community engagement
- Reports
- Convening/Mobilization
- Recommendations
- Advocacy

### Outcomes

- Enhanced services and supports
- Respect for child and youth rights
- Systemic improvements



## Communications and Knowledge Mobilization

- Edits and finalizes RCY reports
- Responds to media requests
- Monitors key issues for the Representative
- Organizes, posts and monitors campaigns on social media
- Creates RCY video and website content
- Prepares materials for speeches, presentations and workshops
- Manages knowledge mobilization initiatives to amplify impact of RCY reports

## Reviews and Investigations

- Reviews child injury and death reports
- Conducts comprehensive reviews and investigations
- Analyzes trends and issues
- Conducts aggregate reviews
- Prepares briefing materials for Executive and Representative
- Refers concerning situations to Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations for follow up
- Brings forward cases of concern to MCFD, ICFSAs or health authorities



## Strategic Priorities

RCY's strategic priorities were renewed in 2021/22 to reflect the current context, environment and issues facing children, youth and young adults in B.C. and they continue to be informed by the Office's systemic monitoring and advocacy work, insights gained through reports of deaths and injuries, RCY's individual advocacy work with children, youth and young adults, and relational work with young people and families, service providers and partners in the child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems.

*Indigenous child welfare* – supporting assertion of child welfare jurisdiction by First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities while also influencing systemic change to improve current services to Indigenous children and youth.

*Children and youth with support needs* – encouraging a comprehensive and equitable policy and program/service transformation for children and youth with support needs and their families and caregivers.

*Mental health and substance use services* – advocating for a culturally attuned, trauma- and evidence-informed, and youth-focused approach to the provision of mental health and substance use supports with a focus on the intersection between these.

*Youth transitions* – continuing to monitor the implementation of a comprehensive array of transitional support services for young adults who have left care to ensure their transition to adulthood is successful and to advocate for positive changes.

*Residential services* – catalyzing improvements to residential services for children and youth, including those with complex needs, with a strong focus on enhancing quality of care and accountability.

*Child rights, voice and participation* – promoting children's rights generally – including children's participation, voice and representation in decisions affecting them – with a focus on the rights and needs of children who are more vulnerable due to their life circumstances and/or societal attitudes.

*Keeping families safely together* – guiding attention to, and advocating for investment in, policies, programs and services that better assist families with vulnerabilities to successfully and safely raise their children.

*Complex needs and quality of care* – advocating for improved planning and supports and quality of care for children and youth with complex needs.



## Complex Needs – Tony's\* story

*\*Note: This is a composite example. Names have been changed to protect privacy.*

When Tony was 11, they loved animals, math, Marvel Comics and playing soccer. They were quiet and a bit shy but kind and loving towards their younger sister, who lived in the same foster home, and their foster parents. Tony had a few close friends whose families enjoyed having Tony around. Tony's biological parents struggled with substance use, mental health concerns and domestic violence, but they cared about their children, and, when they were more stable, they engaged with Tony and their sister and were supported by the foster caregivers to do so. Tony was described as a wise old soul and was able to see that their parents struggled, but that they were trying to stay connected.

Tony felt safe and secure with these long-term foster parents. Catastrophically, in the space of two months, Tony's world collapsed. Their biological mom died of a suspected overdose, and one of their foster parents died unexpectedly and suddenly. The surviving caregiver was overwhelmed with grief, and, before long, they could no longer care for Tony.

Tony's younger sister was able to move to the home of the adult daughter of the foster parents, but they were unable to take Tony as their house was deemed too small and their lives too full for two extra children.

This was a significant time of loss for all of them. But despite the extended foster family's request that they be able to stay actively involved, Tony was moved to a new community due to shortages of local caregivers. The new community was some distance away from family members, including their father, sister, foster parent and their cultural community, and Tony had to leave those friends, school routines, meaningful activities and important connections.

Tony felt overwhelmed, disconnected and unsafe. Self-harming began, as did substance use, as a way to cope.

By the time Tony was 13, they were struggling at school. Substance use had gone from experimentation with cannabis and alcohol to use of a variety of substances. Their new foster parents demanded that Tony be moved, as they had younger children and didn't want Tony around because of Tony's drug use.

Tony was temporarily placed in a staffed resource with a revolving door of other young people and staff. They bounced around a bit more. Mental health concerns escalated, and by the time Tony was 14, they had four diagnostic labels, including generalized anxiety disorder, PTSD and oppositional defiant disorder.

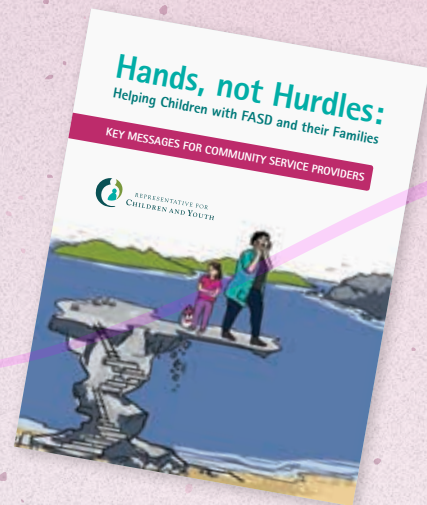
By 15, this quiet, shy and gentle child who, a few short years ago, loved animals, their sister, school and soccer, among other things, was now described as having complex needs, which made them difficult to place. They were sad and angry, and use of substances increasingly become a way to cope. They have overdosed two times in the past three months.





### **Beyond Compliance:** Ensuring quality in care planning

APRIL 2022



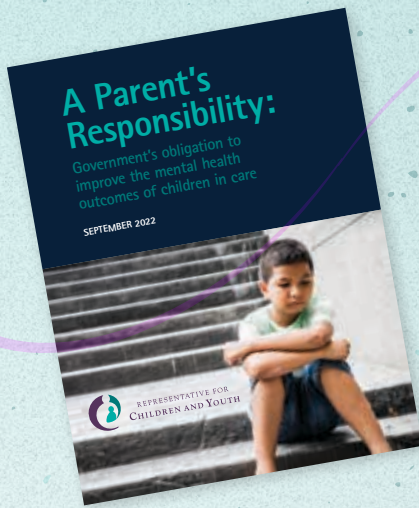
### **Hands, not Hurdles:** Helping Children with FASD and their Families

SEPTEMBER 2022

- This report aligns with RCY's strategic priority on complexity and quality of care and addresses concerns that the compliance-oriented model for care planning in MCFD is inconsistent and outdated
- *Beyond Compliance* examines leading practices in care planning through a jurisdictional scan and RCY research involving children, youth, social workers, foster parents and guardians
- The report identifies six key dimensions that must be present in quality care planning. These dimensions intersect and are mutually reinforcing
- The Representative hopes to see improved care planning to foster belonging and positive life outcomes for young people in government care

- This report aligns with RCY's strategic priority on Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) services and supports
- A condensed, pictorial, user-friendly version of RCY's *Excluded* report
- Provides supportive tips and suggested resources for practitioners, teachers, counsellors and others who work with children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder



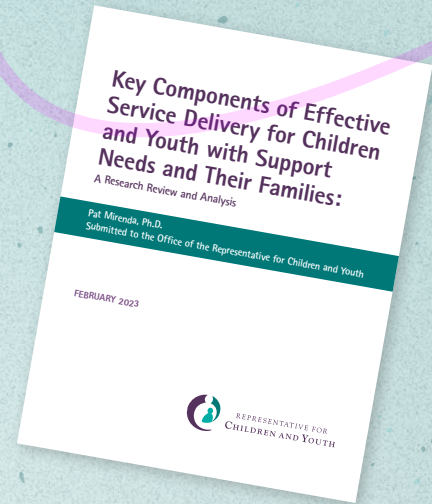


## A Parent's Responsibility:

Government's obligation to improve the mental health outcomes of children in care

SEPTEMBER 2022

- A collaboration between the Children's Health Policy Centre at Simon Fraser University and the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth, this report aligns with RCY's strategic priority on mental health services and supports
- Findings include dramatically higher mental health challenges amongst children in care in similar jurisdictions to B.C.
- Contains six recommendations to government including providing mental health screening and programming for children in care



## Key Components of Effective Service Delivery for Children and Youth with Support Needs and their Families: A Research Review and Analysis

FEBRUARY 2023

- A report by Pat Mirenda, PhD, University of British Columbia
- Commissioned by the Representative to provide valuable information to MCFD as it moves forward with re-imagining the Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) framework
- Offers analysis of service delivery systems for children and youth with support needs (CYSN) and their families.
- Identifies six key components of effective service delivery systems



## Research and Reviews

In 2022/23, RCY undertook or continued work on a number of research, analysis and review projects and initiatives. These included:

### Multiple Strategic Priorities and Statutory Responsibilities

#### *Enhanced Recommendations monitoring process*

- In summer 2022, RCY undertook a comprehensive review of its *RCY Recommendations Monitoring Guidelines (2019)* in consultation with the key public bodies to whom RCY has directed recommendations. It was determined that it would be more efficient to centralize the recommendations monitoring function within SAFNMIR – both for greater efficiency and to help implement a more robust assessment of government-reported progress on recommendations. The shifts in responsibility and processes were communicated to public bodies and will be reviewed annually. On Nov. 2, 2022, the Representative reported to the SSCCY on this work in monitoring recommendations to public bodies, including how the Office has changed its approach.

#### *Recommendations Monitoring Reports 2022/23*

- RCY monitors action planning and implementation of recommendations developed by the current Representative across 10 reports (reports made by past Representatives are included in legacy recommendations). Monitoring assessments that evaluate the progress made by government and public bodies toward implementation of legislation, policy, practice or service delivery improvements recommended by the Representative are completed following the anniversary of each report's release for at least three years or until the recommendations have been fulfilled. Between April 2022 and March 2023, RCY met with government and public bodies 17 times to discuss the development of recommendations, action planning and progress toward the implementation of the Representative's recommendations. In March 2023, RCY posted on its website eight monitoring reports that assessed progress on 63 recommendations.

#### *RCY response to SSCCY Review of RCY Act*

- Under the *RCY Act*, the SSCCY is required to undertake a review of the Act every five years. The goal of this process is to make recommendations for change to the legislation. The Representative filed an initial written submission with the SSCCY in April 2022 and, following further deliberation and consideration of submissions and presentations from other organizations, delivered a final comprehensive report in November 2022. See text box on next page for further detail on the Representative's response to the SSCCY review of the *RCY Act*.



## Review of the *RCY Act*

Section 30 of the *RCY Act* requires the Legislature's Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth to undertake a review of the Act every five years, and to make recommendations to government for amendments to that legislation. This is an important process that can lead to significant changes. For example, this process previously resulted in the expansion of the Representative's individual advocacy jurisdiction to include young adults in receipt of or eligible for CLBC services in 2013 and, more recently, young adults who were formerly in care and who are eligible for an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA) or the Tuition Waiver Program (TWP) in 2019.

The Committee began its most recent review in April 2022 and continued its work throughout the fiscal year. To help inform the Committee's deliberations and submissions from the public, the Representative filed an initial comprehensive written submission to the Committee in April 2022. This was followed by 14 written submissions from a variety of organizations, 13 of whom, along with the Representative, made presentations to the Committee in November 2022.

After review of the written submissions and oral presentations, as well as feedback from key partners, the Representative submitted a comprehensive final report on Nov. 30, 2022. This report addressed a wide range of issues, leading to recommendations ranging from incorporation of reference to United Nations human rights conventions into the *RCY Act* through to information-sharing and disclosure.

Of particular importance to the Representative are recommendations relating to the core principle that a "whole child" or "whole person" approach should be taken in relation to RCY's advocacy jurisdiction, so that the entire range of a child, youth or young adult's needs can be fully addressed. For example, even though education plays a crucial role in a child's development, the Representative does not currently have jurisdiction over special education services for children with support needs (CYSN). Similarly, the Representative's jurisdiction in relation to young adults is narrowly defined and limited to specifically named programs, excluding a wider range of services necessary to ensure an effective transition to adulthood, such as mental health and addiction services. As well, the Representative urged an amendment that would clarify the ability to enter into agreements, if asked, to perform one or more of the Representative's current functions with Indigenous Governing Bodies who reassume jurisdiction over child and family services.

The Committee's final report and recommendations were tabled in April 2023. The Ministry of Attorney General and, eventually, Cabinet, will make decisions to move forward with any proposed legislative changes. The Representative looks forward to working with the Attorney General and other ministries and public bodies on legislative reforms so that services for children, youth and young adults can be more comprehensively and effectively addressed.



### *Children and youth in care who are lost or missing*

- In October 2022, in response to observations from RCY Advocates and Investigations Analysts about a noticeable number of children and youth who were lost or missing from the B.C. child welfare system, the Representative called for an immediate focused review of children and youth who are missing, "running from," "hiding from" or "lost in" the care system. RCY subsequently identified 198 children and youth who fell into this category, and also identified significant concerns with policy and practice respecting these children and youth. Results of the review were shared with the Provincial Director of Child Welfare and RCY worked with MCFD to identify gaps in the current tracking and reporting of missing or lost youth.

## Strategic Priority: Mental Health

### *Mental health and wellness*

- RCY is involved in a multi-year research collaboration examining mental health and wellness for distinct populations of children and youth – children and youth in care; children and youth with support needs; and Indigenous children and youth in care. In September 2022, RCY released the report, *A Parent's Responsibility: Government's obligation to improve the mental health outcomes of children in care*, that accompanied a report that RCY commissioned from SFU's Children's Health Policy Centre (CHPC) (see page 57 for a description of report). A second research review on mental health services for children and youth with support needs, done in collaboration with the CHPC, will be released in 2023/24. The third report in RCY's mental health series, concerning the mental health of Indigenous youth in care, is being done through a research partnership with Dr. Catherine Richardson of Concordia University. In 2022/23, separate research was also undertaken by Dr. Fred Chou and Dr. Tim Black of the University of Victoria on trauma-informed practice for children and youth in care who had experienced developmental trauma.

## Strategic Priority: Child rights, voice and participation

### *Experiences and outcomes for gender diverse youth*

- Based on its review of critical injury and death reports received by the Office for Two-Spirit, trans, gender diverse and non-binary (2STNBGD) young people, the Representative has identified serious concerns about the experiences of, and the outcomes for, these young people and is reviewing the circumstances, experiences and the services they receive (or fail to receive) from government. As part of this review, RCY commissioned research by the University of British Columbia's Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC). A report based on this review and including recommendations is expected to be released in June 2023. (See text box below for more information on SARAVYC).



## Strategic Priority: Complex Needs and Quality of Care

### *Systems Failing Girls/Girls' experiences in the system of care*

- The Systems Failing Girls review is examining the experiences of girls in B.C.'s system of care. The work is informed by data from across RCY, including advocacy cases as well as quantitative data from critical injury and death reviews and the stories of a number of girls as captured in completed comprehensive reviews. The project also involves collaboration with external partners including Dr. Natalie Clarke of Thompson Rivers University, whose involvement is instrumental in developing partnerships with organizations working with girls to ensure that the work is informed by lived experience. Matriarch and Gitskan Hereditary Chief Audrey Lundquist is providing advice and guidance on how to do the work in a culturally sensitive way, consistent with the Six Rs. The findings will be shared in early 2024.

### *Female-identifying youth experiencing sexual exploitation*

- In 2022/23, RCY continued its research project with the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC). Data gathered from child and youth death and critical injury reports and advocacy files identified a group of female-identifying youth who have experienced sexual exploitation by older males. This type of violence has implications for child-serving systems that are responsible for meeting the complex needs of these young people. In many cases, these youth have been unwilling or unable to seek health care or other support services, to feel safe cooperating with police, or to separate themselves from violent relationships, often due to the lack of relationship and trust that they have with systems of care. The findings will be shared in early 2024.

### Collaboration Initiative – SARAVYC

The Representative's commitment to relationship-building, collaboration and wisdom harvesting to strengthen the work of the Office is demonstrated in a review undertaken on services for Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse (2STNBGD) children and youth.

RCY commissioned research by the Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC) at the University of British Columbia, a renowned centre that investigates how stigma, discrimination, violence and trauma affect young peoples' health. SARAVYC conducted two literature reviews and a series of analyses using data from the 2019 Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey and the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey and also completed interviews with 2STNBGD youth in B.C. SARAVYC has done incredible work in developing relationships with Two Spirit communities, fulfilling its commitment to have Indigenous researchers lead the analysis of research on Indigenous people, and in applying its thoughtful approach and network engagement in completing interviews with 2STNBGD youth under this review.



## Outreach and Engagement

With COVID-19 restrictions lifted in early 2022, RCY staff were able to return to in-person engagements and travel throughout the province to provide education and awareness to children, youth and young adults and the community services organizations that work with them.

### Foster parent workshops

One of the key priorities for RCY outreach and engagement staff is the delivery of a series of workshops for foster parents focusing on children's rights, self-advocacy and transition to adulthood planning. The intent of this initiative is to support caregivers and provide background on the importance of child rights and self-advocacy and how foster parents can support the education and growth of these skills in their homes. RCY began offering these workshops in spring 2022 to foster parents in the Northeast and Central Interior. In 2022/23, the outreach and engagement team facilitated 15 workshops reaching 75 foster parents. Participating foster parents and caregivers demonstrated a strong interest in learning about children's rights and ways to encourage self-advocacy at home in fun, positive and interactive ways.



*Representative Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth and Deputy Representative Pippa Rowcliffe participate in the Mothers Matter Conference, May 2023*





*Deputy Representative Samantha Cocker with RCY All-Staff meeting co-lead Yuxwelupton, March 2023*

## Relationship-building with Indigenous communities and organizations

Another significant initiative was to re-establish relationships with Indigenous communities and Friendship Centres around the province. RCY outreach and engagement staff resumed their community liaison work, focusing on building meaningful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Friendship Centres and Indigenous communities throughout the province. In 2022/23, RCY: hosted 12 events in 10 communities, connecting with 155 people through outreach to Friendship Centres; met with 67 people in five First Nations communities; attended the June 2022 National Indigenous Day event in Surrey; and hosted 11 events with eight ICFSAs, reaching 179 people.

Other RCY outreach and engagement staff highlights include:

- visiting 34 communities in person and/or virtually
- hosting 34 youth and young adult engagement activities
- participating in two youth conferences – the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks' Youth Retreat and the BCAAFC's Gathering Our Voices, involving 1,280 youth and young people
- participating in three adult conferences – Our Children Our Way Conference, Inclusion BC Conference and the Alternative Educators Conference, involving 2,150 participants.

In all, RCY outreach and engagement staff participated in activities and initiatives that exposed a total of 5,323 people (including 1,493 youth and young adults, and 3,830 adults and professionals) to the work of the Office.

See Appendix 1 for detailed data tables of outreach and engagement activities during 2022/23 and Appendix 2, which includes a comprehensive list of outreach, engagement and communication activities that the Representative and her staff participated in during 2022/23. The graphic on page 65 illustrates the province-wide outreach the Office conducted in 2022/23.



### Collaboration Initiative

#### *Our Children Our Way Conference: A Forum for Indigenous Child and Family Well-being*

The Representative's dedication to collaborative engagement and knowledge exchange motivated RCY to participate in the inaugural Our Children Our Way Conference: A Forum for Indigenous Child and Family Well-being. Held in Vancouver in November 2022, the event drew over 800 delegates from across Canada, including band designates, Indigenous Elders, young people with lived experience in the child welfare system, and lawyers and service workers. RCY was a funding sponsor and 24 RCY staff members participated in the conference to learn from the traditional knowledge being shared.

The three-day conference centred on themes of prevention practices, support for service providers, the resumption of Indigenous jurisdiction over child welfare, community engagement, and improved practices for Indigenous child and family services.

Over the course of the conference, RCY staff offered six presentations. One workshop was focused on drawing insights and findings from RCY's *At a Crossroads* report (March 2022) that addressed discrimination in Indigenous child welfare funding. Another workshop – offered twice – focused on RCY's ongoing project on Systems Failing Girls. That discussion centred on ways to decolonize service design, restore connections to culture, and hold systems accountable for harms being perpetrated. The third workshop – offered twice – shared insights from the *Skye's Legacy* report and engaged participants in discussing opportunities and practices to enhance relational, physical, cultural, legal and identity belonging and connection for young people. In addition, RCY's HR Director participated in a collaborative presentation on promising HR practices.

Along with the presentations, RCY also hosted a booth throughout the conference where RCY Advocates connected with attendees and shared information about the work of the Office and how it helps children and youth.



*Dr. Cindy Blackstock presenting at the Our Children, Our Way Conference, November 2022*



# Outreach and Engagement

**334**

Outreach contacts to  
Friendship Centres and  
Indigenous Child and  
Family Service Agencies

**15**

Foster parent/  
caregiver sessions

**10**

Outreach presentations on  
Agreements with Young  
Adults and Provincial  
Tuition Waiver Program

**67**

Outreach contacts  
to First Nations  
in B.C.

**34**

Communities  
Visited

**24**

Rep's meetings  
with MCFD

**71**

Youth custody centre  
outreach (Prince George  
and Burnaby Youth  
Correctional Centres)

**25**

Speaking  
engagements



## Knowledge Mobilization

Following is a description of the key Knowledge Mobilization initiatives undertaken by RCY in the last fiscal year:

### *Belonging Workshops*

- In November 2022, RCY continued its knowledge mobilization work on the investigative report *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging* (June 2021) by offering a full day learning session on the importance of belonging in the lives of young people for members of MCFD's Executive team. Also that month, RCY presented two workshops on belonging at the Our Children Our Way conference. RCY's Communications and Knowledge Mobilization and Reviews and Investigations teams and youth advisors also worked with the Representative to facilitate a workshop on belonging for members of the BC Federation of Community and Social Services in March 2023. A series of workshops has been planned for leaders and practice consultants in MCFD, along with a "toolkit" of resources to enable MCFD, ICFSA and community sector practitioners to host their own belonging dialogue and practice sessions.

### ***Fast Fact***

Maintaining connections to family, friends and community is key to supporting children and young people in care to develop their identity and sense of self.

**Source:** RCY, April 2022, *Beyond Compliance: Ensuring quality in care planning*

### *Belonging Microsite*

- Another way that RCY is mobilizing knowledge gained from the *Skye's Legacy* report is through the development of a "microsite" off RCY's main website that focuses solely on the theme of belonging. Launched in April 2023, the microsite features background on learnings from the report and Skye's story and written resources and videos on the importance of belonging, as well as quotes from Skye and other young people that illuminate the benefits of belonging and the adverse effects on a young person when they don't have a sense of belonging in their lives. The microsite is aimed at MCFD and ICFSA workers as well as front-line community service providers who work with young people. The Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team plans to continually add resources to this microsite.



*Participant at RCY's All-Staff meeting, March 2023*



### FASD Knowledge Mobilization

- In 2022/23, RCY expanded work on its report, *Excluded: Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and their Families* (2021), by creating a short, graphic-heavy and user-friendly guide for those who work with or care for children with FASD. This report, entitled *Hands, not Hurdles: Helping Children with FASD and their Families*, was intentionally designed as a resource to assist practitioners and was released on International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day. As with the earlier *Excluded* report, this report was co-created by Myles Himmelreich, an adult with FASD with more than 16 years' experience working in the field, who helped bring forward a clear understanding of these children and families, their strengths and challenges. Also helping to communicate those challenges – as well as the supports that can help children, youth and their families to thrive – was artist Sam Bradd, who provided the illustrations for *Hands, not Hurdles*.

#### Fast Fact

Blame and misconceptions are harmful to children and youth with FASD and their families. Together, they can result in discrimination or inappropriate supports being provided to children and youth with FASD. Children and youth with FASD live happy and healthy lives when given the right supports.

**Source:** RCY, September 2022, *Hands, not Hurdles: Helping Children with FASD and their Families*

## Convening

Some key convening initiatives that RCY undertook in 2022/23 included:

### Gender Diversity

- RCY wanted to ensure that it had a full understanding of 2STNBGD youth in B.C. and the services and supports that could improve their well-being. In addition to ensuring that the voices of 2STNBGD young people were heard through interviews conducted by SARAVYC, RCY convened a diverse group of advisors with a range of lived and professional experience to assist the Office in determining the most significant opportunities for meaningful change in this area. RCY held three extended gatherings involving 19 community practitioners, researchers, advocates and academics who offered their insights and knowledge on the experiences of 2STNBGD children and youth and their caregivers with provincial child- and youth-serving systems. This feedback was critical in the development of the findings of RCY's review, scheduled for release in June 2023.



### *Partners in Dialogue*

- The Representative is committed to clear strategic priority themes guided by values and commitments that preference relational approaches, raise a collective youth voice and catalyze dialogue toward change. At the end of fiscal 2022/23, the Office partnered with the Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University to support RCY's sustained commitment to engagement with a wide variety of partners and collaborators, bringing them together to build a collective energy on topics that are complex and require multiple perspectives to instigate significant change. The focus of the Wosk Centre on building common understanding on difficult and complex topics will be essential to RCY in moving forward a range of topics key to the well-being of children and youth – for example, the toxic drug supply and youth substance use.

## Relational Work

Following are some of the highlights of the relational work done with Indigenous communities, ICFSAs, First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations and leaders, and First Nations with regard to jurisdiction:

- The Representative and her staff engaged in ongoing monthly meetings with the First Nations Leadership Council to better understand the issues and strategic priorities and provide assistance and support as requested.
- RCY staff participated as invited guests of the ICFSA in Directors Forum and Partnership quarterly meetings to update the Directors on the work of the Office and to seek their input and support in the project work being undertaken.
- RCY, with Nation Leadership and Indigenous Governing Bodies in several different territories, learned about pathways to jurisdiction and the nature of the relationship between the Nations and RCY as jurisdiction unfolds.
- RCY contracted with First Nations lawyers to help advise staff on the federal legislation and to better understand how to walk alongside the young people whose Nations are on paths to resuming jurisdiction.

## Enabling Mechanisms

Consistent with the Office's commitment to the Six Rs and Four Ps, RCY has adopted an approach of ongoing learning and adaptation with the aim of continually strengthening and improving the organization.

At the start of 2022/23, RCY set clear and ambitious goals for a renewal of its enabling mechanisms – the organizational structures and processes that provide the infrastructure to enable the RCY team to fulfill its statutory mandate and effect positive change. Enabling mechanisms address such areas as: organizational structure and distribution of staff resources; remote and decentralized work options and supports; office design; staff recruitment, retention and development; education and training; administrative and project supports; budget development and allocations; and project and research design tools and methodologies.



Some achievements in this area include:

- *Refining RCY's organizational structure and processes to strategically allocate resources for greater impact and to enhance efficiency and effectiveness*

RCY has made significant strides in this area. In response to a significant increase in volume and complexity of critical injury and death RCs during 2022/23, the Reviews and Investigations team was restructured and rebuilt. The core systemic advocacy functions and the structure were also clarified. Further, RCY has allocated resources to extend its outreach and engagement capacity for children, youth, families and communities. The new youth and community engagement team will be fully established in early 2023/24.

The current labour market necessitates streamlined and timely hiring processes and a focus on retention. In response, RCY has begun a process to examine and reimagine its recruitment processes, staff development and retention approaches and practices.

- *Continuing to apply lessons learned from pandemic-related workplace adjustments, staff feedback and research on promising practices for remote work to enhance the working environment and experience for staff*

RCY is committed to remote work and decentralization – all staff have the choice of full-time work from home, a hybrid arrangement or being full-time in either the Prince George or Victoria office. This has allowed RCY to recruit and retain staff across the province and support a better work-life balance for staff. It has also functioned to maximize the accessibility of the organization, allowing the Office to recruit and retain employees with disabilities. At the same time, strategies to promote a sense of community and encourage cross-team collaboration and creativity have been adapted to include two in-person all-staff gatherings and two provincial virtual all-staff gatherings per year, regular weekly all-staff update meetings and also team, project and regional gatherings.

Design of new working space on the first floor of the Victoria office, with a focus on promoting a collaborative workspace and a warm and welcoming environment for young people, Elders, Matriarchs and staff was undertaken in 2022/23 with full development of the space to be completed in 2023/24.

RCY has also started an Accessibility Working Group to both ensure that RCY complies with the *Accessible BC Act* and to shift organizational culture to enable full and effective participation for all staff, to ensure inclusion and belonging so that we can do our best work for children, youth and families. The aim is to remove barriers and create an equitable environment for all who interact with the organization, including all young people, cultural groups and communities, service providers, partners, parents and caregivers, and RCY staff.

- *Ensuring ongoing staff development and organizational capacity building at RCY*

In 2022/23, staff education, training and cross-organizational learning and practice initiatives included development of further training in complexity, including delivery of in-depth complexity training to the Executive team. RCY staff undertook formal anti-racism training, and training in trauma- and Indigenous trauma-informed practice. The September 2022 all-staff meeting included the participation of Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, Carey Newman and Métis Elder Jo Ina Young. Teams also held a variety of informal, practice-based, in-person and virtual awareness building exercises in cultural safety, anti-racism and restorative practice.





*RCY staff participate in an All-Staff meeting, March 2023*

- *Improving Corporate Services to better meet the evolving demands and needs in both RCY and the BCOHRC*

RCY completed an in-depth analysis of the functions of each component of Corporate Services – Finance, HR and IMIT – and is in the process of refreshing the connections between RCY and BCOHRC by defining the scope and specific intention of each component of the agreement and required resources.

- *Improving administrative services to better meet the evolving demands and needs of the organization*

RCY completed a review of administrative services in 2021/22. During 2022/23, the recommendations included in that report guided a range of important changes including stabilizing a central administrative function, updating and building administrative systems and recruiting skilled staff. The administrative team now works closely with Corporate Services and other functions that support the operational needs of each team, including records management and project coordination.

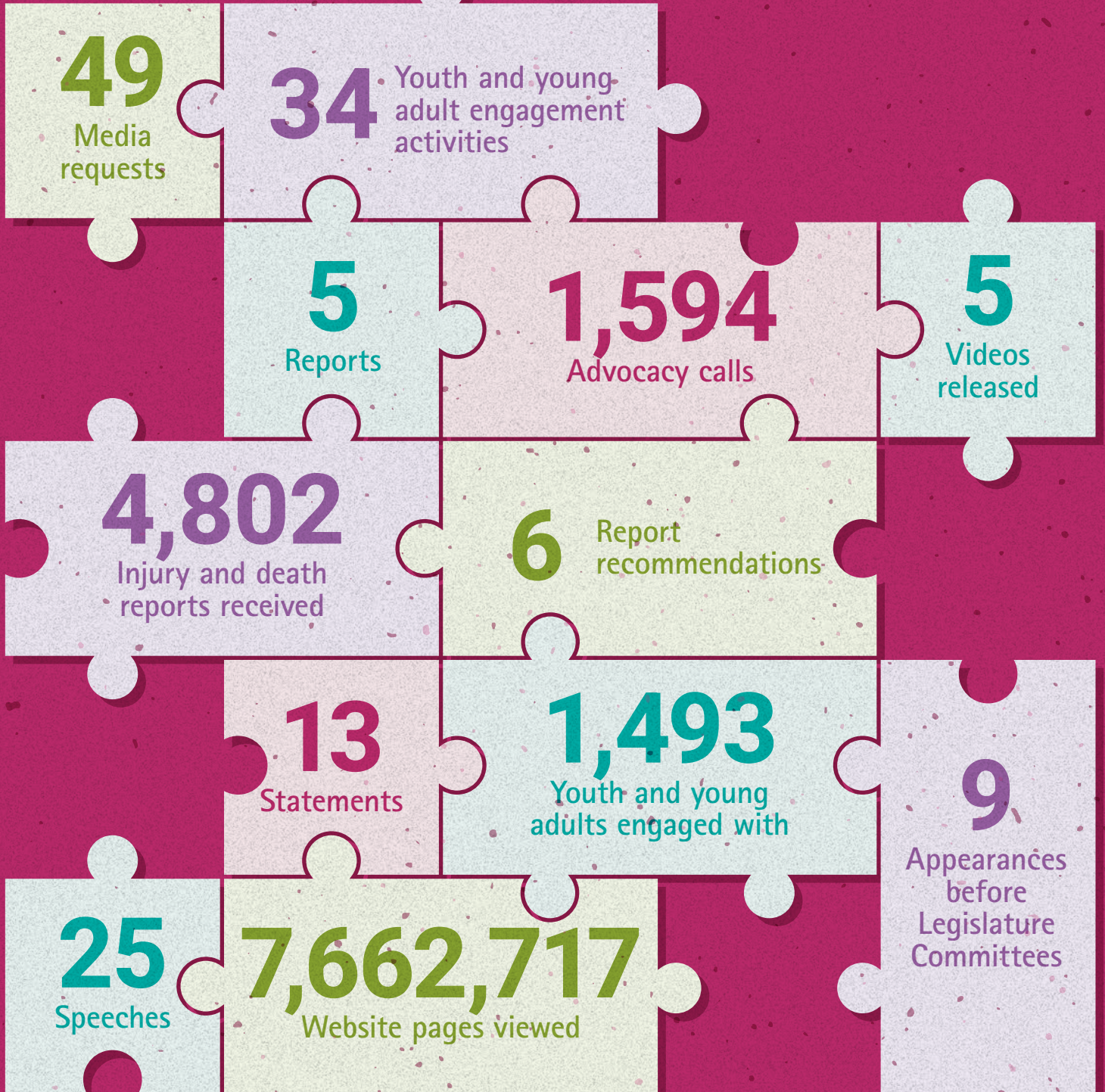
RCY guides a number of significant projects each year and the administrative review identified the specific need for skilled project coordinators. During 2022/23, a core project coordination team was established, working closely with the two Deputy Representatives as the main sponsors of all RCY projects. The team is tasked with developing consistent project coordination and management templates, supporting budget development and management, and ensuring that timelines and deadlines are met.

- *Ensuring that the financial resources provided to the organization are used appropriately, efficiently and effectively to fulfill RCY's mandate*

RCY completed a comprehensive review of its budget to ensure alignment and allocation of sufficient resources to both core work and strategic priorities.



# Year In Review



# Looking Ahead



# Our Key Projects/Activities for 2023/24 and Beyond

The following section outlines the key projects and strategic activities that are either already underway or planned for the 2023/24 fiscal year in addition to the core work of each RCY team.

RCY regularly reviews its strategic priorities to ensure they are reflective of the current environment and that it is responsive and attuned to the issues facing children, youth and young adults and their families. In 2023/24, RCY began a review of its strategic priorities and any renewal to its strategic priorities will be reflected in the 2023/24 report.

## Reports

### Multiple Strategic Priorities and Statutory Responsibilities

#### *Five-Year Recommendations Review*

- In March 2023, RCY posted on its website its Recommendations Monitoring Reports for 2022/23. The document outlined overall progress of 63 recommendations monitored by RCY, overall progress by public bodies, overall progress by service area and overall progress by report. A report, scheduled for release in April 2023, will take a closer look at how well recommendations made by the Representative have been implemented by government. The report will examine the enablers of, and barriers to, progress along the pathway to implementation and identify challenges and delays in actioning recommendations.

#### *Children disappearing from B.C.'s child welfare system*

- In 2022/23, RCY undertook an urgent and targeted review of children and youth missing or absent from their placements in response to more than 500 reports, representing 198 distinct children and youth in government care who were lost, missing or away from their placement and who experienced a critical injury or were considered at risk of harm between April 1 and Dec. 31, 2022. In April 2023, RCY will release its first issues brief outlining the preliminary findings of the review. Due to the Representative's concerns about the risks facing missing children and youth, this issues brief will be prepared within a short time frame. It will not be an exhaustive review and will not include the voices of young people themselves, their families, social workers, child and youth care workers and caregivers. However, it will serve to identify a systemic problem and set out recommendations for immediate and short-term action. It will also inform convening work that RCY will do in fall 2023 to engage diverse concerned voices to collectively identify longer-term actions for systemic change.



## Strategic Priority: Children and Youth with Support Needs

### *Follow up report to Left Out: Children and Youth with Special Needs in the Pandemic*

- In December 2020, the *Left Out: Children and Youth with Special Needs in the Pandemic* report focused on the impact of the pandemic on children and youth with support needs in B.C. and illuminated the fragility of B.C.'s support systems for the tens of thousands of B.C. families who rely on these services. A follow-up report will check in with the 14 B.C. families whose stories were told in the 2020 report *Left Out*, and RCY's 2021 report *Excluded: Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and their Families*. The new report, to be released this fall, will reveal that families continue to struggle under an uncertain and inadequate system of services and supports for children and youth with disabilities. It will also present findings from a survey of parents and caregivers.

### *Accountability Report*

- This report, expected to be released in early 2024, will advocate for immediate and effective change to improve the support and service system for children and youth with disabilities and their families in B.C. and will hold government to account on its promises of service delivery improvements. The report will include stories from families and services providers across B.C. and will:
  - define the prevalence of this population in B.C.
  - summarize past RCY recommendations/guiding principles and review MCFD/government responses to date
  - examine Budget 2023 commitments and evaluate the progress, and
  - propose immediate actions needed in next six, 12 and 18 months to improve the service system for children and youth with disabilities in B.C.

### *CYSN Service Framework: The Pathway Forward*

- This report will make specific recommendations for immediate service delivery changes to address the needs of children and youth with disabilities who are currently not served or who are under-served by the system. Learning from lived experience and research, the report will also make recommendations and provide timelines for a best practice future-state model of service delivery for children and youth with disabilities in B.C. This report is anticipated to be released in spring, 2024.

## Strategic Priority: Mental Health

### *Mental Health services for children and youth with support needs*

- As part of the previously noted research collaborations and series of three reports on mental health services for distinct populations of children and youth, RCY will release its second report developed in collaboration with CHPC on mental health services for children and youth with neurodevelopmental conditions in April 2023. The research evidence shows that mental health challenges are much higher for children and youth with neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, FASD and intellectual disabilities. The Representative's report will make recommendations for how government can 'reset' the framework for children and youth with support needs to ensure that these children receive the mental health services they need.



## Strategic Priority: Child Rights, Voice and Participation

### *Report on child and youth voice in family justice proceedings*

- In late fall 2023, RCY will release its second report in a series examining child and youth participation and voice in legal matters that affect them, and how opportunities for young people in this area can be improved. This second report, which follows up on the 2021 RCY report *Detained*, will focus on young peoples' participation and voice in child protection and family law matters. Key findings from this report will be shared with young people and adults during a September 2023 conference that RCY is co-hosting with the Transforming Family Justice Collaborative, Youth Voices Initiative and the Society for Children and Youth (see text box below). Their feedback and guidance will be incorporated into the final report.

### *Gender Diversity*

- The Representative will release a report in June 2023 to present the findings of the critical injury and death review that has identified systemic issues related to services and outcomes for 2STNBGD children and youth. This report will incorporate the findings of interviews with 2STNBGD young people conducted by SARAVYC, the feedback from experts who were convened to provide input and, as a companion to its report, RCY will also release the SARAVYC research document outlining its literature reviews and analyses. The report will call on the government to take action and play a proactive role in ensuring that these young people are protected from discrimination and stigma, are safe and cared for, and have access to the gender-affirming services and supports that they need to thrive – and that are their right to receive.

### *Child Rights, Voice and Participation*

- In keeping with the strategic priority of promoting and advancing children's participation, voice and representation in decisions affecting them – with a focus on the rights and needs of children who are more vulnerable due to their life circumstances and/or societal attitudes, the Representative has collaborated with the Society for Children and Youth and commissioned research reports which will canvas the specific issue of children's capacity to participate in decisions affecting them in four key areas: family law proceedings; proceeding under the *Mental Health Act* and similar civil commitment processes such as secure care; child welfare proceedings, and health care consent and information sharing. These reports will be sequentially released, beginning in the latter part of 2023.



## Keeping Families Safely Together

### *Keeping Families Safely Together in the Early Years*

- The first planned product in this multi-dimensional initiative will be released in fall 2023. This will be a commentary that builds from five scholarly articles commissioned by RCY on upstream approaches to keeping families safely together. These articles will address foundational early years topics, including a healthy brain and social development, bio-ecological approach, health and social inequities, coloniality and its impact on young children, and the influence of trauma on children and families. The commentary will also present the outcomes from initial engagement sessions with external practitioners, experts – including an Indigenous Circle of Advisors – and some families that considered both the current state of the early years in B.C. and aspired to a transformed approach to nurturing young children and supporting their families.

### **Fast Fact**

Supports offered to the family as a whole acknowledge the pivotal role that families play in defining Indigenous identity and a sense of connectedness to kinship and culture.

**Source:** RCY, February 2023, *Key Components of Effective Service Delivery for Children and Youth with Support Needs and Their Families: A Research Review and Analysis*



*Our Children, Our Way Conference, November 2022*



## Collaboration Initiative

### *Transforming the Family Justice System Collaborative*

The Representative's dedication to collaborating with family justice-oriented organizations led RCY to become an integral member of the Transforming the Family Justice System Collaborative (TFJS), a multi-sectoral initiative run by Access to Justice BC (A2JBC). Launched in June 2022, the TFJS Collaborative uses an intersectoral approach to support children, youth and families involved in the family justice sector by bringing together leaders and organizations from the justice, health, education, child welfare and community sectors. The meaningful participation of children and youth with lived experiences in the family justice system is at the forefront of the work, as well as the inclusion of Indigenous leaders and disability rights advocates.

The Collaborative – led by Jane Morley, KC – organizes its duties within three Communities of Action. The themes are Child and Youth Meaningful Participation, Intersectoral Family Justice, and the Support Finder. RCY's involvement is primarily focused within the first theme, Child and Youth Meaningful Participation.

RCY contributes to the development of a more comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of child and family justice issues through participation and engagement in guest presentations and collaborations with TFJS members. Guest speakers have included Dr. Laura Lundy and her world-renowned model of child participation, and the Toronto-based Future Ready Initiative, which runs Family and Youth Mentorship Programs.

The Representative is also directly involved in the development of prototype projects such as the Natural Networks project, which aims to connect youth in the family justice system with support figures in their communities who can provide guidance and direction, as well as the Youth Connectors project, which will bring young people experiencing family separation together to foster social connection and the sharing of stories, in addition to introducing them to resources and services that can offer support.

RCY is a co-host and funder of the TFJS September 2023 Child and Youth Family Justice Conference. The event will be co-designed and led by young people with diverse lived experiences, and professionals from a variety of sectors that interact with children and youth. The equal and equitable inclusion of youth at the conference planning level will be an exciting achievement that can hopefully set a precedent for the essential integration of youth in foundational organizing roles in family justice-based undertakings. The hybrid online and in-person conference will be co-hosted in Vancouver with Access to Justice BC, Youth Voices (Family Justice Innovation Lab) and the Society for Children and Youth BC.

TFJS is a powerful collaborative for change that is actively working toward empowering youth and supporting families to thrive by fostering connections to better support children, youth and families more broadly and holistically.



## Research and Reviews

Following is a description of some of the key research/review projects underway and planned by RCY.

### Multiple Strategic Priorities and Statutory Responsibilities

#### *Fraser Region Investigation*

- In response to the horrific abuse inflicted on two First Nations children in care in a small Fraser region community, which ultimately resulted in the death of one of the children in 2021, the Representative took the unprecedented step of announcing publicly that RCY has begun a full investigation into these circumstances. As previously noted, this investigation will help us to understand what contributed to the tragic outcome for this young child and the other children who were subject to the violence and what can be done to prevent similar situations in the future. It is anticipated that the investigation will also illuminate a number of systemic issues that the Representative will also address. The Representative has publicly committed to releasing the investigative and systemic review report in June 2024, and to identifying opportunities for immediate action to better protect and support children and youth in care, as and when they become apparent.

#### *Youth Justice Review*

- The Representative is conducting a systemic review of youth justice services administered by MCFD with a particular focus on youth custody services. The review will examine the factors leading to a very substantial and welcome decline in demand for all youth justice services and the implications for the effective and efficient use of financial, human and facility resources.

### Strategic Priority: Indigenous Child Welfare – Indigenous Jurisdiction

#### *Indigenous laws, legal frameworks and implementation*

- The legal landscape for Indigenous child well-being is emergent and evolving. There are substantive changes at the Federal level with *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families*, *UNDRIP* legislation and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal settlement; some provinces and territories are amending their child welfare legislation (e.g., the recent *Child, Family and Community Services Act* amendments in B.C.); B.C. has *DRIPA* legislation in place; and Nations and Indigenous Governing Bodies (IGBs) are restoring and recreating their Indigenous laws concerning child well-being and welfare. While there is considerable excitement and enthusiasm for the shifts that are underway, there are many unknowns and questions.

Aligned with RCY's strategic priority on supporting Indigenous jurisdiction, RCY, Our Children Our Way (OCOW) Society (representing Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency Directors) and the Caring for First Nations Children Society (CFNCS) are co-designing and hosting a conference on legal frameworks, strong practices and implications of the evolving landscape of Indigenous child well-being in Canada.



## Strategic Priority: Mental Health and Substance Use

### *Mental health and wellness for Indigenous children and youth in care*

- RCY is continuing its review of the mental health of Indigenous youth in care with a research contribution from Dr. Catherine Richardson of Concordia University. This is the third and final research stream under the planned series of research reviews of mental health services for distinct populations of children and youth including children and youth in care, children and youth with support needs and Indigenous children and youth in care.

### *Meaningful mental health supports for children and youth*

- The Canadian Mental Health Association British Columbia (CMHA-BC) is keen to collaborate with RCY to build a foundation of improved understanding of the issues related to child and youth mental health and the complexity of these, and possible strategies to address them. Both CMHA-BC and RCY are intent on mounting a robust engagement process that will support improved discourse about the importance of significant systemic change related to how we support wellness at multiple levels for our children and youth. The project will build understanding through a range of activities that include traditional research, story-telling, engaged and generative conversation, and convening. It will involve a range of activities designed to build a comprehensive understanding of the current context and a collective commitment to act on evidence-based solutions and will directly involve youth in building leadership capacity to advocate for their mental health needs.

### *Youth-focused harm reduction*

- Through a research collaboration with the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR) based at the University of Victoria, RCY will gain a better understanding of the research evidence on youth-focused harm reduction initiatives for children and youth who use substances and are at risk of injury or death due to the highly toxic illicit supply in B.C. CISUR is also engaging directly with youth with lived expertise to determine what harm reduction approaches will be most helpful and effective.

## Strategic Priority: Complex Needs and Quality of Care

### *Systems Failing Girls*

- Data collection and analysis continues with respect to the review of systemic failures impacting the well-being of Indigenous and non-Indigenous girls involved in the child welfare system. The findings of the research and analysis are to be collected into a full-scale aggregate review outlining the failure of systems to adequately support girls experiencing multiple challenges.

### *Female-identifying youth experiencing sexual exploitation*

- RCY plans to complete its research project with EVA BC in 2023/24. The project is using a mixed research methodology to examine the supports required for female-identifying youth who have experienced sexual exploitation from older males. The goal is to release a joint issues paper through RCY and EVA BC with the research findings helping to inform future projects as well as integrating recommendations to child- and youth-serving systems. The desired outcome is trauma-informed, no-barrier services to support female-identifying children and youth experiencing violence.



## Outreach and Engagement

### *Youth and community engagement strategy*

In fall and winter 2023, RCY's reimagined youth and community engagement unit will work alongside their RCY colleagues to renew RCY's engagement strategy.

This strategy will ensure that RCY's approach to engagement is grounded in the Six Rs, Four Ps, ethical principles and strong practice-based evidence. The team will support engagement efforts across RCY to build effective relationships in the community and to ensure that the voice and experience of children, youth and young adults is upheld.

RCY youth and community engagement staff will work over the next three years to engage with – and gather the views of – young people across the province. This work will be multi-faceted and will include creating space for, as well as hosting, young people across B.C. to speak to the work of RCY and help inform the Representative's strategic priorities. In addition to this work, and in the spirit of reciprocity, the team will gather a circle of youth and young adults with lived experience across the province to support ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange to better understand and influence change in the systems with which they engage.

Youth and community engagement staff will create youth-specific, multi-media projects and educational tools, create opportunities to elevate the stories and experiences of children, youth and young adults within the work of RCY, organize focus groups and coordinate presentations and additional community outreach to young people across the province.

This work will have a dedicated focus on young adults who are accessing MCFD's Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) program (formerly referred to as Youth Transitions) and other related areas of RCY's expanded mandate.

Youth and community engagement staff will also share and gather information and perspectives from community agencies across the province that are delivering services to children, youth and young adults to ensure RCY is informed of the challenges and opportunities in delivering services to young people at the community level.

RCY will continue to focus on and strengthen cultural safety and inclusion in all areas of its work. Youth and community engagement staff will build relationships with Indigenous communities and service providers across the province. Through this engagement, RCY will listen, learn, share information, and gather the important views and experiences of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous young people interacting with service systems.

All these initiatives will improve RCY's "on the ground" understanding of the systems of care and will help the Office to influence and advocate for improved services and outcomes for children, youth and young adults in B.C.



## Communications and Knowledge Mobilization

Some of the key Communications and Knowledge Mobilization activities and initiatives that RCY will engage in this fiscal year include:

### *Toxic drug crisis social media campaign*

- Running throughout much of the 2023/24 fiscal year, RCY's toxic drug crisis social media campaign will be a multi-month campaign featuring four distinct stages. The campaign has been designed to raise awareness of the direct and indirect impacts of the toxic drug crisis on children, youth and young adults in B.C. and to generate input about how the environment could be made safer for those young people who use illicit drugs. The four campaign stages include an overview of the injuries and deaths experienced by children and youth as a result of the crisis, including information from the BC Coroners Service as well as internal RCY data. The campaign also includes voices of young people with lived expertise of using in the current toxic drug environment as well as the voices of those on the service front-lines who are trying to help young people stay safe. Finally, the campaign will include recommendations on how children, youth and young adults can be better served and kept safer when it comes to dealing with the toxic drug crisis.

### Collaboration Initiative

#### *Toxic Drug Crisis*

The Representative has worked closely with Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry, Chief Coroner Lisa Lapointe and other experts in the field (including peer networks and those with lived expertise) to share and analyze knowledge and data on the effects of the toxic drug crisis on young people in B.C. The Representative is a member of the Coroner's Death Review Panel focusing on the toxic drug supply, harm reduction and safer supply and regularly meets with other panel members, including the PHO and Chief Coroner, to discuss trends seen in RCY Advocacy cases and Reviews and Investigations data as well as information from other public bodies. Data from both the PHO and the Coroners Service, as well as from other panel members, is also used to inform RCY's work in this area.

### *Continued Outreach on Belonging*

- Following up the RCY report *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging* (June 2021), the Office will continue its outreach to emphasize the importance of belonging in the lives of all children, youth and young adults in B.C. and particularly those who are in government care and/or receiving services. These efforts will include maintaining and adding to RCY's Belonging microsite developed in the wake of the report release, which offers background information on the importance of belonging, as well as a variety of video and written materials to help further discussions amongst those who work with young people. RCY will also offer a workshop "toolbox" for government and community agency workers to be able to host their own belonging workshops.



## Convening

Some of the key convening activities planned by RCY include:

### *Continued CYSN Mobilization*

- As MCFD revisits its approach to the CYSN sector, RCY will continue to monitor this work and help mobilize families, support organizations, service providers and experts in the field to provide real-time feedback and analysis to government and the public. This includes re-engaging the families who contributed to RCY's *Left Out* (December 2020) and *Excluded* (April 2021) reports as well as an RCY-led CYSN working group that includes Dr. Pat Mirenda of UBC, who wrote the report *Key Components of Effective Service Delivery for Children and Youth with Support Needs and their Families* (February 2023) in relation to MCFD's ongoing efforts to improve the CYSN system.

### *Exploring Ways to Address Substance Use*

- There is tremendous – and understandable – fear and controversy concerning how best to respond to problematic substance use amongst young people, prevent catastrophic harms and promote healing. RCY plans to address this head-on. In conjunction with its toxic drug crisis social media campaign, and in collaboration with the Wosk Centre for Dialogue, RCY intends to bring diverse – and sometimes opposing – voices together and centre on the children and youth who are at risk of profound harm or death due to the highly toxic unregulated drug supply. This convening will include the voices of youth, family members and caregivers, medical professionals, service providers, researchers and others to innovatively explore what could and should be done to address one of the most vexing challenges RCY sees through its work.

### **Fast Fact**

The 36 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2022 among those under the age of 19 represents a 600 per cent increase in such deaths as compared to 10 years prior when there were six deaths (2013).

**Source:** BC Coroners Services –  
Unregulated Drug Deaths – Age Group

### *Children who go missing*

- In May 2023, the Representative will release the issues brief *Missing: Why are children disappearing from B.C.'s child welfare system?* The report will include recommendations for specific action by MCFD to improve its monitoring and data collection, policy and practice to address missingness. In late 2023 or early 2024, the Representative will host a convening of the child-serving systems and the children, youth, families and communities they serve to identify and respond to the systemic and structural causes of children and youth going missing from the child welfare system and ask: What are the conditions of unbelonging that lead to children becoming lost or missing in the child welfare system?



## Relational Work

Key relational work to be undertaken by RCY in 2023/24 and going forward includes:

- Continuing regular meetings with the FNLC
- Continuing outreach to Nation Leadership and Indigenous Governing Bodies to learn about their pathways to jurisdiction and understand the nature of the relationship between the Nations and RCY
- Maintaining relationships with ICFSAs to ensure ongoing information sharing
- Collaborating with the Our Children Our Way Society (representing ICFSA Directors) and the CFNCS to design and host a legal symposium to share knowledge, experience and lessons learned on the jurisdiction pathway (see page 77). This symposium will also help RCY to understand where to place the focus as we walk alongside Nations and ensure that all young people are supported well during this time of transition.
- Renewing its MOU/Protocols with the FNLC and MNBC and establishing a new MOU with the ICFSAs, the Our Children Our Way Society and First Nations Education Steering Committee. As the landscape of Indigenous child welfare changes, so will our relationships and it is the intention of the Representative to be a good ally in these evolutionary times.
- Designing and developing a ceremony of repair and restoration that RCY will host with ICFSAs in spring 2024 to mark a new beginning where RCY will be seen as a truthful and thoughtful ally to the call for systemic reform of Indigenous Child and Family Services.



*Photo by Aaraksh Siwakoti*



## Enabling Mechanisms

Building on work in past years, RCY has established some areas for priority action in 2023/24:

- *Refining RCY's organizational structure to strategically allocate resources for greater impact and to enhance effectiveness and relevance*

RCY will continue to focus on a range of human resource and organizational structure and capacity issues to ensure that each team has the people and resources needed to fulfill its contribution to RCY's work and responsibilities.

Initiatives include:

- commitment to a significant renewal of RCY human resource practice including recruitment, on-boarding, staff development and performance management. A consultant will complete a comprehensive review of Human Resource practice by mid-2023/24, and changes will be implemented during the second half of the year
  - a continued focus on Indigenous recruitment, supported by a renewed special program designation provided by the BCOHRC to allow RCY to restrict some hiring to Indigenous applicants. This includes a commitment to a 25 per cent Indigenous staff complement by 2027. This initiative supports and encourages the process of decolonizing RCY policies and procedures; the broadening and deepening of relationships with Indigenous leadership, Nations, communities and organizations; and increases the focus on supporting the resumption of jurisdiction while advocating for changes to better support Indigenous children and youth now
  - developing increased capacity in the SAFNMIR team to focus on improving government accountability to RCY recommendations
  - ongoing attention to capacity in the Reviews and Investigations team to address the increasing number of critical injury and death reports as well as complex investigations
  - completing the recruitment and hiring of a new Legal and Strategic Policy position to provide legal, legislative and strategic policy advice, and
  - ongoing adaptation of core support functions at RCY including administration, records coordination and project coordination/management.
- *Improved in-office working environment and experience for staff*
- While RCY continues its commitment to remote work and to decentralization, mechanisms for fostering connection through in-person and virtual gatherings for all staff and regular staff updates remain a priority. RCY will be completing projects to improve in-office space in 2023/24 in both Victoria and Prince George while ensuring both are fully accessible.
- *Fostering belonging, inclusion and wellness within RCY*
- RCY has committed, through its Six Rs and Four Ps, to an organizational approach that emphasizes belonging, inclusion and wellness for all staff. For the 2023/24 fiscal year, three areas of work will be particularly important:
- ensuring strong and comprehensive Indigenous cultural practice that guides all RCY in-person and virtual gatherings, meetings, projects and investigations



- completion of work to move RCY from a previously colonial human resource policy framework toward a framework of wellness policies
- a focus on building the influence of RCY's Accessibility Committee, formed in late 2022/23, across all areas of RCY's work. RCY will also hold at least one seat on the Independent Officers of the Legislative Assembly Accessibility Committee. The goal of this work is to ensure that RCY provides a sense of belonging for all staff, those who interact with the organization, and to raise awareness of and shift culture around ableism and accessibility issues; and
- in addition, all RCY staff will have opportunities to enhance their understanding and application of the Six Rs and Four Ps. This includes staff training in restorative approaches as part of the organizational commitment to the Four Ps.



*Photo by Aaraksh Siwakoti*



- *Improving corporate services to better meet the evolving demands and needs in both RCY and BCOHRC*

In 2023/24, RCY will begin a reorganization of corporate service functions, both strategic and transactional, to better meet the needs of both RCY and BCOHRC. This realignment will be based on insights gained through the 2022/23 in-depth review of corporate service provision to both Offices. It will also include a renewed approach to Corporate Services staffing at RCY and BCOHRC by the end of 2023/24 that will better serve the leadership of both organizations while ensuring that changes are cost-neutral.

- *Ensuring that the financial resources provided to the organization are used appropriately, efficiently and effectively to fulfill RCY's mandate*

The process of budget review and assessment is ongoing as every opportunity is taken for both efficiency and allocation of resources for the greatest impact.

- *Improving understanding of child and youth trends*

In 2023/24, RCY will draft a data strategy to guide all aspects of RCY's data approach. This includes:

- data collection and modernization of the RC form, including in collaboration with MCFD and the ministries of Health, Citizens' Services, Housing, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Education and Child Care
- data entry, including improved coding and quality assurance approaches across all RCY teams to ensure consistency and quality of data
- data storage, including improvements to RCY's CITAR data system
- data analysis, including consideration of new tools and platforms that allow for easier data analysis to identify key trends and issues
- data reporting, such as the assessment of data dashboards.

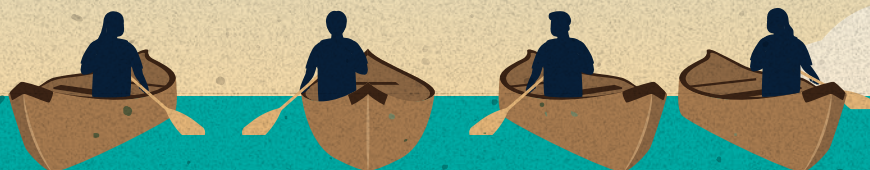
- *Continuing to encourage and enable reporting compliance to RCY by the Ministry of Health and health authorities*

RCY will work with the Ministry of Health and health authorities to create the processes required to enable these public bodies to consistently report critical injuries and deaths of children who receive mental health services to the Representative, as required by law.



# What's Coming Up?

Look for these and more projects now underway...



## Children and Youth With Support Needs (CYSN)

As MCFD revisits its approach to serving children and youth with support needs and their families, RCY is continuing to place its own strategic focus on this area. The Office plans to release in October 2023 an update on how the families who contributed to RCY's *Left Out* (December 2020) and *Excluded* (April 2021) reports are faring now, some three years later.

RCY is also planning to release a follow-up report later in the 2023/24 fiscal year that will provide a current-state examination of government's CYSN plans, a look at prevalence rates of support needs among B.C.'s children and youth, and an assessment of how government has addressed both past RCY recommendations and its Budget 2023 commitments in this area. Through this project, the Representative will make recommendations on how government can better serve these children and families going forward.

## Child Rights, Voice and Meaningful Participation in Family Justice Matters

The second report on child rights and participation in decisions being made about their lives will be released in Fall 2023. The first report, *Detained*, addressed the rights of children and youth who are involuntarily detained under the *Mental Health Act*. This second report aligns with multi-sectoral interest in transforming the family justice system within the broader Access to Justice movement in B.C. It centres the experiences of young people involved in *Family Law Act* and *Child, Family and Community Services Act* proceedings who have vividly described the harms that are caused in the current adversarial systems. Too often they feel that their rights and perspectives are ignored and adults fail to explain what is happening and why decisions are made that have such a profound impact on their lives. Youth and supportive adults have identified practical and feasible ways to ensure meaningful participation.

## Child Death Investigation and Systemic Review

The Representative has publicly announced that RCY is conducting a full investigation into the circumstances that led to horrific abuse being inflicted on two First Nations children in foster care in the Fraser Valley, which ultimately resulted in the death of one of the children in 2021. As a result of the work already undertaken on the investigation, and of consultations with Indigenous and community leaders, the Representative has determined that a review of broader systemic issues is also necessary to respond to and learn from this tragedy. The resulting public report and recommendations will be released in June 2024.

## Systems Failing Girls

In 2023/24, RCY will release a full-scale aggregate report outlining how B.C.'s child- and youth-serving systems have failed to adequately support girls experiencing multiple challenges. This report is the result of a major cross-RCY project steeped in Indigenous worldviews and based in the Office's Six Rs. It will identify how a lack of coordinated government supports directly and indirectly impacts girls in care who have multi-faceted and complex needs. Using a multi-team, decolonized approach, the project has focused on the situations of girls who were and are in government care, and aims to challenge the "deficit narrative" – that is, the idea that there is something wrong with the youth themselves. Instead, this project illuminates how systems are not working for them. This report will build upon patterns identified by RCY that show an increasing frequency of systemic failings. It will also articulate the role of systemic racism and gendered vulnerabilities, which are related to the core findings of the final report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG.



# Performance



For the 2022/23 fiscal year, RCY continued to assess and report on its performance by tracking existing standard measures related to its relevance, responsiveness, accountability and excellence. These measures were initially developed in consultation with the SSCCY and have been in place for a number of years. Reporting on them again this year provides for the continued and important process of tracking performance over time.

At the same time, RCY has begun the process of reviewing and revising key performance measures, in consultation with the SSCCY, in order to better assess RCY's influence on B.C.'s child- and youth-serving systems, both short- and longer-term. RCY has repeatedly called for public bodies to improve data collection and reporting as well as track outcomes, and intends to hold itself to the same standards. This will enable RCY to report publicly on its influence and track internal performance so that strategy and action can be adapted over time to be more effective. In addition to working with the SSCCY, the revision process will engage a range of external partners such as Indigenous leadership and organizations and provincial organizations. It will also build on recent work undertaken by the Office reporting on the responsiveness of government to recommendations made by the Representative over the last five years.

The revision process will assess the relevance of current output measures and define new outcome measures for RCY and establish a range of new indicators. These will enable a broader and more detailed reflection on RCY's influence at a range of levels:

- specific and clear changes in the systems that serve children, youth and young adults: policies, programs and services
- the perceived quality and influence of RCY's advocacy activities – including reports/ recommendations, collaborative projects and convening as assessed by youth, community and other partners
- the quantity of RCY's outputs in delivering mandated services – including critical injury and death activities, individual advocacy, and partner engagement and relationship development
- the efficient and effective use of resources and RCY's commitment to its values and principles.



*Photo by Aaraksh Siwakoti*



## 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, community partners and the Legislature
- makes recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of designated programs and reviewable services with the goal of improving the child-, youth- and young adult-serving systems.

**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-, youth- and young adult-serving systems 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 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 community partners, illustrating that the Representative is alert to issues, is in touch with the system and community partners and reacts accordingly.

Key Performance Indicator:	2022/23 target	2022/23 result	2023/24 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 community partner</li> </ul>	50%	60%	50%

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2022/23 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>	RCY has in place a monitoring process to assess government's response to recommendations by RCY. The <i>RCY Recommendations Monitoring Guidelines</i> , developed in 2019 in consultation with MCFD and the ministries of Education and Child Care, Health and Mental Health and Addictions, were enhanced in 2022 to centralize monitoring of recommendations within RCY and to provide a more robust assessment of government-reported programs.
<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 2022/23, the Representative's website had 168,898 visitors who viewed 7,662,717 pages on the site.



## Responsiveness

Timely and effective response to requests for assistance and support from 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:	2022/23 target	2022/23 result	2023/24 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%	88%*	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 time frame</li> </ul>	100%	100%	100%

\* 98.2 per cent of adult callers were responded to within five days.

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2022/23 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 2022/23, 98.5 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 community and partner 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 community partners across the province</li> </ul>	In 2022/23, the Representative and staff participated in a total of 264 outreach and engagement activities. This included participation in events, conferences, workshops, meetings and speaking engagements. Appendix 2 includes a list of outreach and community engagement activities undertaken by the Representative and staff in 2022/23.
<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 2022/23, the Representative and staff participated in activities ranging from virtual and in-person events, workshops and engagement sessions involving 1,493 youth and young adults.



Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2022/23 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 2022/23, the Representative and staff met with 40 First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous communities and organizations and participated in 37 Indigenous events, conferences, speaking engagements and meetings.

\*\* 99.40 per cent of youth were responded to within three days.

## 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 as well as comments and statements about the findings of her work.

Key Performance Indicator:	2022/23 target	2022/23 result	2023/24 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of reports and papers publicly released and the number of public statements made by the Representative</li> </ul>	10 reports and statements	18 reports and statements	10 reports and statements

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2022/23 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 2022/23, the Representative appeared before the SSCCY five times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>April 22, 2022, discussed the <i>Representative for Children and Youth Act</i> (the Act)</li> <li>April 22, 2022, reviewed <i>At a Crossroads</i> report</li> <li>Nov. 2, 2022, reviewed the <i>RCY Annual Report 2021/22 and Service Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25</i>, and discussed RCY Recommendations Tracking and Knowledge Mobilization</li> <li>Nov. 4, 2022, RCY presented on the review of the Act</li> <li>Dec. 5, 2022, reviewed the Reports: <i>A Parent's Responsibility and Beyond Compliance</i>.</li> </ul> <p>The Representative appeared before the SSCFGS three times: April 27, 2022, Oct. 26, 2022 and Feb. 27, 2023.</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:	2022/23 target	2022/23 result	2023/24 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%	95%*	95%

\* Staff participated in learning sessions offered both externally through the BC Public Service Agency and internally through specific organizationally arranged sessions. Examples include:

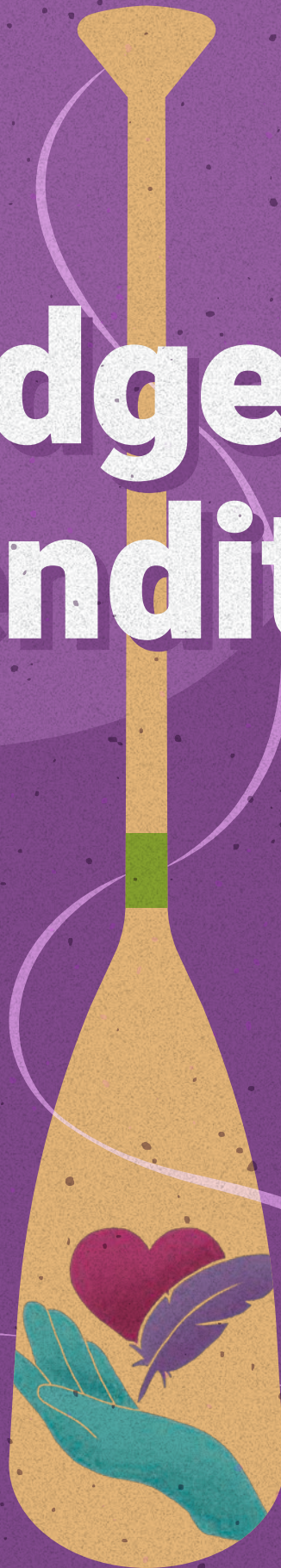
- National Indigenous Peoples Day – Day of Learning
- Cultivating Belonging for Non-binary Employees and Job Seekers
- Middle Years Development
- Accessible Documents Training
- Wrapping Our Ways Around Them: Indigenous Communities and Child Welfare Guidebook and Workshops
- Turning the Inaccessible into the Accessible
- Gender Diversity in the Workplace
- UBC Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre – research on gender diverse and gender non-binary youth
- Diversity and Inclusion Essentials
- Indigenous and Canadian Histories 101
- Supporting Workplace Change
- Leading a Reconciliation Dialogue
- Trauma and Resistance Training



Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2022/23 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>	<p>RCY's Wellness Policy Group is working on a wholesale revision to RCY internal HR policies as a significant area of decolonization for RCY.</p> <p>To foster relationship and a sense of belonging and connection, RCY Executive hosts full-day staff meetings including with guest speakers and small-group learning opportunities (virtual meeting in September 2022 and in-person meeting in March 2022), as well as regular staff and team meetings.</p>
<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>	<p>In this reporting period, the OHS Committee continued to focus on supporting RCY Executive with advice on emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic and moving into regular operation of a communicable disease prevention plan.</p> <p>RCY Executive maintained a focus on mental health and well-being through regular reminders in staff videoconferences and updates of the well-being resources, including RCY's Specialized Counselling Program, available to employees.</p> <p>RCY Executive also coordinated well-being and cultural safety supports for employees through healing circles, office cleansing/brushings and Elder supports in partnership with Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society.</p>
<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>RCY is audited by the Office of the Auditor General as part of its annual Consolidated Revenue Fund audit.</p>



# Budget & Expenditures



The Office is funded by the Legislative Assembly to spend funds 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 RCY budget shown in the tables below is based on budgeted expenses approved by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in December 2021 (Annual Review of the Budgets of Statutory Offices – December 2021). The following tables and graphs compare the voted appropriation to total operating and capital expenditures for fiscal year 2022/23.

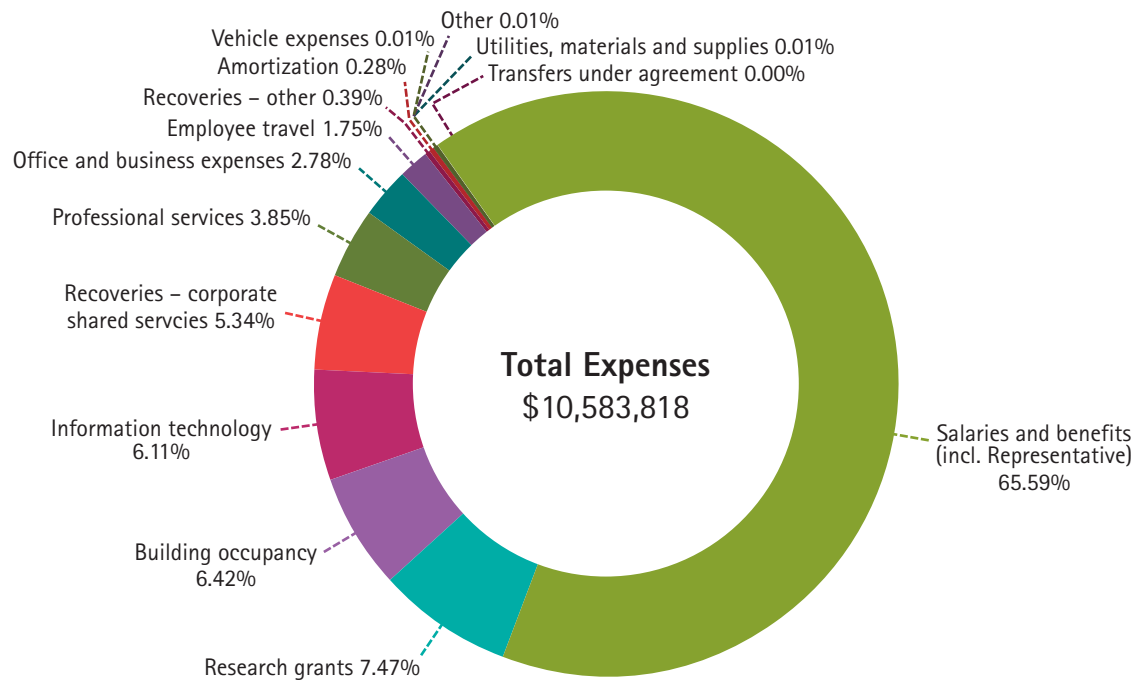
## Actual Expenditure and Budget – 2022/23

Operating Expense Type	Budget	Actual
Salaries and benefits (incl. Representative)	8,904,000	7,842,308
Employee travel	355,000	207,456
Professional services	402,000	460,780
Information technology	630,000	730,279
Office and business expenses	437,000	332,375
Utilities, materials and supplies	5,000	939
Vehicle expenses	8,000	1,048
Amortization	55,000	33,112
Building occupancy	817,000	767,628
Research grants	5,000	892,750
Transfers under agreement	5,000	–
Recoveries – corporate shared services	(639,000)	(639,000)
Recoveries – other	(3,000)	(46,968)
Other	1,000	1,112
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>10,982,000</b>	<b>10,583,818</b>

Capital Expense Type	Budget	Actual
Information technology	45,000	7,005
Office furniture & equipment	5,000	–
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>7,005</b>



## Actual Expenditures by Expense Type – 2022/23



## Looking to the Future – Approved and Planned Budget for 2023/24 to 2025/26

The table below illustrates operating and capital budgets approved for 2023/24 and planned for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Operating	Note	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Salaries and benefits	1	10,049,000	10,358,000	10,358,000
Employee travel	2	373,000	373,000	373,000
Professional services	3	473,000	473,000	473,000
Information technology	4	696,000	696,000	696,000
Office and business expenses	5	405,000	405,000	405,000
Utilities, materials and supplies	6	5,000	5,000	5,000
Vehicle expenses	7	–	–	–
Amortization	8	55,000	55,000	55,000
Building occupancy	9	837,000	857,000	857,000
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 – Corporate Shared Services	13	(710,000)	(730,000)	(730,000)
Recoveries – Other	13	(3,000)	(3,000)	(3,000)
<b>Total Operating</b>		<b>12,191,000</b>	<b>12,500,000</b>	<b>12,500,000</b>



Capital Expense Type	Note	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
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 includes fees and expenses for professional services rendered directly to the Office for the provision of services in the delivery of RCY 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 includes supplies and services required for the operation of the Office.

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

Note 7 Vehicle expenses includes 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 includes 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 includes 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 includes expenses, such as financing costs, valuation allowance, and other expenses, which cannot be reasonably allocated to another category.

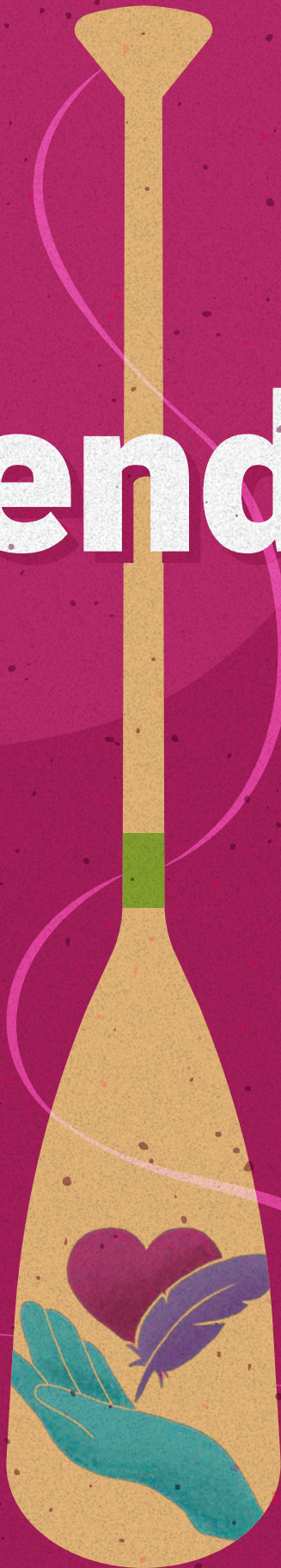
Note 13 Internal and external recoveries include the recovery of costs from other Officers of the Legislature, ministries, participants and sponsoring organizations for activities described within the vote.

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.



# Appendices



# Appendix 1 – Core Program Detailed Statistics and Trends

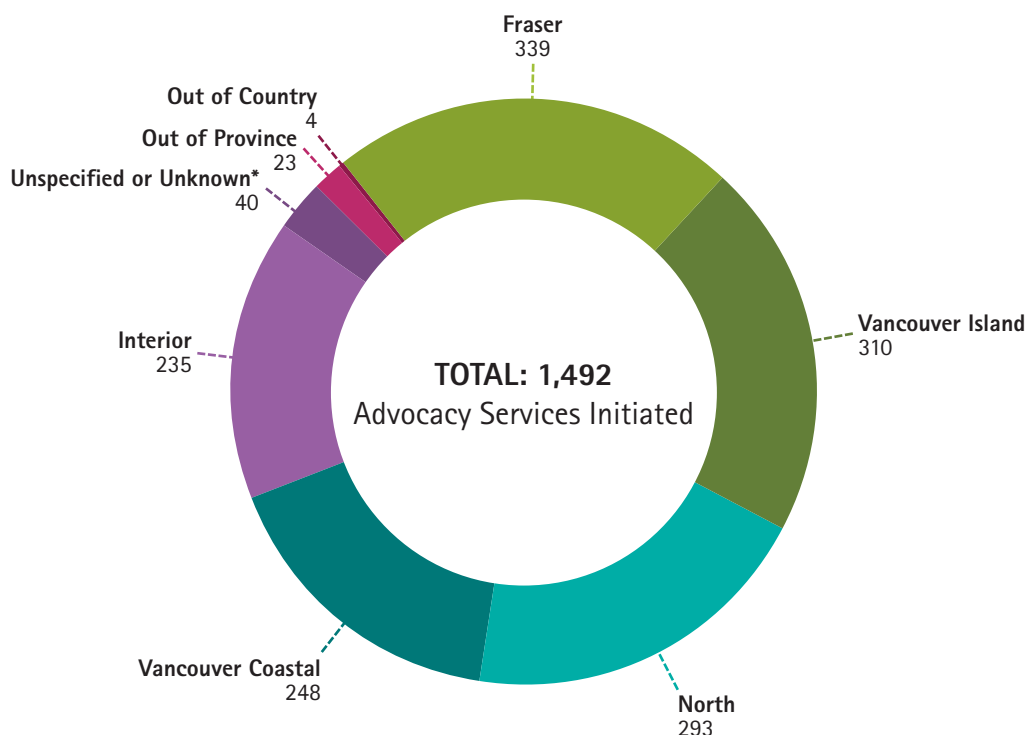
## Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement

### Advocacy Data and Statistics

In 2022/23, RCY was contacted either by – or on behalf of – a total of 1,492 children, youth and young adults in search of information, advice, support and direct advocacy.

Figure 4 identifies where the 1,492 young people were residing in B.C. at the time contact with RCY Advocacy services was initiated. While the figure below identifies where the children, youth and young adults were located, the region they were receiving service from may be different for some children, youth and young adults living outside their community.

**Figure 4 – Where Children, Youth and Young Adults Resided when Advocacy Service was Initiated.**

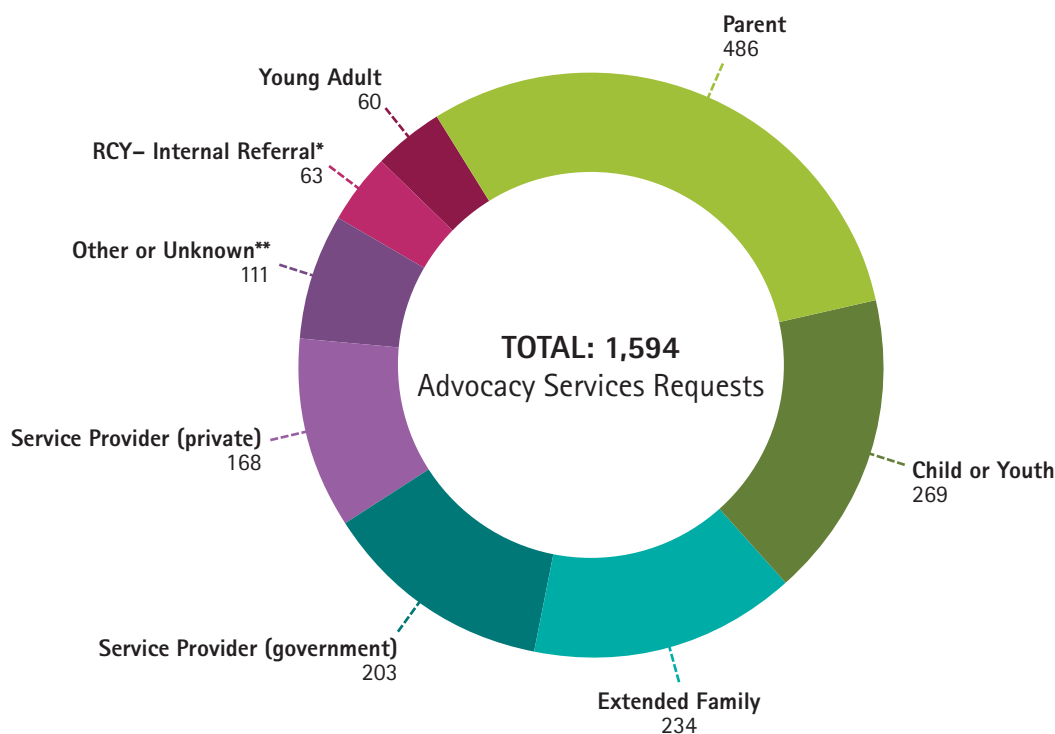


\*"Unspecified or Unknown" indicates that the living location of a child was not confirmed, usually due to RCY not being able to confirm this information with the person who initiated contact. The person may not have known where the child, youth or young adult was living or RCY was unable to connect with the person for more detail.



Figure 5 illustrates who contacted RCY on behalf of children, youth and young adults. Parents and extended family remain the largest portion of individuals requesting information, advice, support and direct advocacy on behalf of their children. For 2022/23, there was an increase in children, youth and young adults who reached out directly to access advocacy support – from 289 children, youth and young adults to 329.

**Figure 5 – Who is requesting advocacy services?**



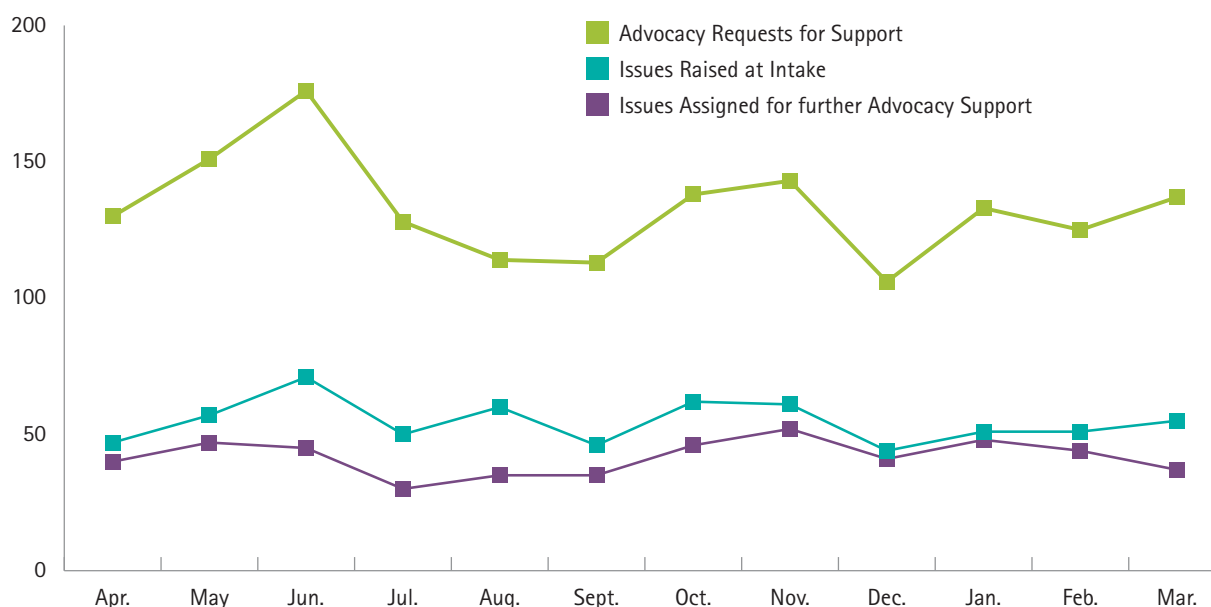
\* "RCY – Internal Referral" includes referrals from the Reviews and Investigations team or a referral from RCY leadership who may have been directly contacted by an MLA, for example.

\*\* "Other or Unknown" includes situations where the Advocacy team has not been able to confirm who reached out as no further contact could be made with the person who initiated contact (e.g., caller left a message, but did not respond when contact attempts were made) or situations where it was a neighbour, private community member or friend contacting RCY on behalf of a child, youth or young adult.

Note: On occasion, RCY receives more than one call from different parties about a child. As a result, the requests for service number is slightly different from the number of young people served.

Figure 6 below illustrates the number of advocacy requests received, the number of files addressed by the Intake Advocates at the intake stage and the number of files assigned to an Advocate for further assessment, support and/or direct advocacy.



**Figure 6 – Advocacy Requests, Intake Files and Advocacy Files Fiscal Year 2022/2023**

Over the years 2013 to 2017, RCY evolved its practice with regard to how it records and manages data on the children, youth and young adults served by the Advocacy team. RCY's practice had been to open a separate file for each individual child, youth or young adult, even in the case of sibling groups, and also to open a separate file for each issue impacting the child, youth or young adult. This sometimes resulted in multiple files for a family and multiple files for a young person, which was not the most effective way to understand their story over time.

As noted in last year's *RCY Annual Report and Service Plan*, the Advocacy team is now working with a revamped data and case management system. RCY's current practice is more person-focused and administratively lean. The Advocacy team is now able to enter more than one child, youth or young adult per file regarding sibling groups, and is able to associate specific issues to each individual child, youth or young adult within that file over time.

Figure 7 shows the number of issues dealt with by the Advocacy team over 2021/22 and 2022/23, the two years that RCY has been working under the new data and case management system.

**Figure 7 – Number of issues handled by Advocacy team**

	21/22 Intake	22/23 Intake
First quarter	491	545
Second quarter	446	414
Third quarter	425	478
Fourth quarter	504	526
Total	1866	1963



Comparisons to fiscal years prior to the practice change in RCY's data and case management system lack relevancy due to the reasons cited above. However, Figure 8 shows the Advocacy case numbers year over year since 2018/19.

**Figure 8 – Advocacy Case Numbers 2018/19 to 2022/23**

Fiscal Year	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Total	1589	1596	1371	1346	1155

## Outreach and Engagement Data\*

Outreach Activity or Event	Community/Organization/Individual	Number of Events/Sessions	Number of Participants
Indigenous Community Outreach	First Nations	5 First Nations met with	67 people
Friendship Centre Outreach	Friendship Centres in 10 communities	12 Events	155 people
Indigenous Child and Family Service Organizations/Agencies	8 organizations	11 Events	179 people
Agreements with Young Adults/Provincial Tuition Waiver program Outreach	Youth and Service Providers	10 Events/Sessions	150 people
Foster Parent/Caregiver Rights Sessions	Foster Parents and Caregivers	15 events	154 people
Custody Centre Outreach	Youth in Custody at Prince George and Burnaby Youth Custody Centres	23 Clinics	71 youth
Youth Rights/Self-Advocacy Sessions	Youth and young people (13 to 24 years of age)	8 Sessions	129 youth and young adults
Youth Conferences	Youth and young people (13 to 24 years of age)	2 Events	1,280 youth and young adults
CLBC Meet/Greet/Information Sessions	CLBC service providers	3 Events	65 people
MCFD Meet/Greet/Information Sessions	MCFD staff	8 Events	62 people
Post-secondary Presentations	Post-secondary Students	1 Event	22 students
General Outreach	Communities and organizations across B.C.	15 Events	195 people

\* Note that this data is inclusive of events and activities that RCY Outreach staff/Advocates were involved in, but does not include Representative and Deputy Representatives' engagement activities.



## Reviews and Investigations

### Reviews and Investigations Data 2022/23

Figure 9 shows the total Reportable Circumstances received in 2022/23, the number within RCY's mandate and those out of mandate. In 2022/23, Reviews and Investigations received 4,802 Reportable Circumstances, of which 2,482 (52 per cent) met the Representative's mandate for children and youth who received reviewable services during the preceding 12 months (an average of 210 per month).

**Figure 9: Total Reportable Circumstances (In- and Out-of-Mandate) 2018/19 to 2022/23**

Fiscal Year	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
In-mandate injuries	1,061	1,237	1,813	2,403	2,353
Out-of-mandate injuries	1,153	1,850	2,627	2,565	2,314
In-mandate deaths	110	95	95	110	129
Out-of-mandate deaths	8	10	1	4	6
<b>Total Reportable circumstances (In- and Out-of-mandate)</b>	<b>2,332</b>	<b>3,192</b>	<b>4,536</b>	<b>5,082</b>	<b>4,802</b>

\*The numbers of in- and out-of-mandate critical injuries will differ over time due to continual quality assurance and data cleaning processes.

Figure 10 below indicates the number of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services that fell within RCY's mandate after an initial review for the years 2018/19 to 2022/23. Of the 2,482 reports of in-mandate critical injuries and deaths in 2022/23, 129 were reports of in-mandate child and youth deaths.



Figure 10 – In-Mandate Critical Injuries and Deaths – 2018/19 to 2022/23

Fiscal Year	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Critical injuries	1,061	1,237	1,813	2,403	2,353
Deaths	110	95	95	110	129
Total	1,171	1,332	1,908	2,513	2,482
Year-to-year change in total in-mandate critical injuries and deaths	Baseline	14%	43%	32%	-1%
Cumulative % increase in total in-mandate critical injuries and deaths since 2018/2019	Baseline				112%

\*The numbers of in-mandate critical injuries and deaths may be different here from those reported in previous RCY annual reports because of continual internal quality assurance processes.

Note to figure: The causal factors for the one per cent decrease in in-mandate critical injuries and deaths is unclear. MCFD is seeing slightly lower rates of children coming into care with out-of-care options increasing (1,075 in April 2017 compared to 1,944 in April 2022) as are children served by CYSN (children and youth with support needs). Youth Agreements have remained relatively stable over the past five years. Differences in reporting practices due to workforce instability and modified duties across service areas and offices may account for the slight decrease. Though in-mandate injuries decreased slightly over the past fiscal year, there was a 14 per cent increase in in-mandate deaths over the previous fiscal year.

Figure 11: Critical Injuries and Deaths by Indigeneity and Care Status – 2022/23

			In care	Not in care	Subtotal	% of total
Deaths	Indigenous	First Nations	10	31	41	
		Métis	1	4	5	
		Inuit	0	1	1	
		Indigenous: Unspecified*	0	0	0	
		Total Indigenous	11	36	47	37%
	Non-Indigenous		7	73	80	63%
Critical Injuries	Indigenous	First Nations	780	282	1062	
		Métis	229	69	298	
		Inuit	6	0	6	
		Indigenous: Unspecified*	7	8	15	
		Total Indigenous	1,022	359	1381	59%
	Non-Indigenous		557	448	965	41%

\*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. Seven records where Indigeneity is unknown have been removed from the total injury count and two records where Indigeneity is unknown have been removed from the total deaths count.



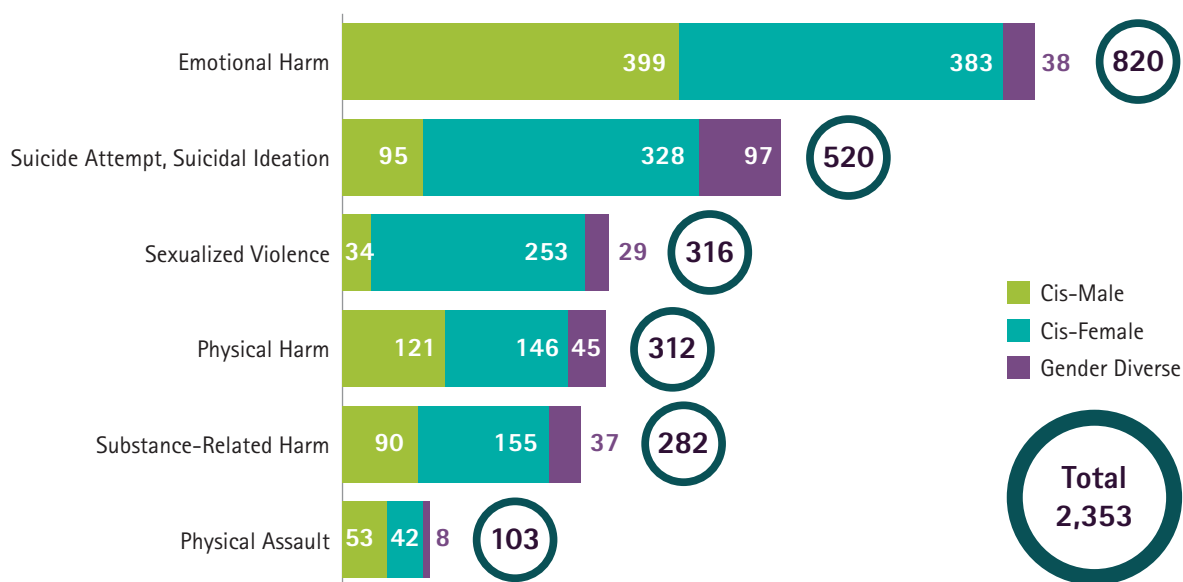
RCY is keenly aware of the over-involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of Indigenous children, youth and their families. The figure above provides evidence that this over-involvement is also reflected in RCY reportable injuries:

- Of the 2,353 in-mandate critical injuries reported to RCY in 2022/2023, 1,381 critical injuries (59 per cent) were experienced by Indigenous children and youth.
  - 1,022 (43 per cent) of the total in-mandate critical injuries (2,353) were experienced by Indigenous children and youth in government care.
- Of the 1,381 injuries experienced by Indigenous children:
  - 1,062 (77 per cent) were experienced by First Nations children and youth
  - 298 (22 per cent) were experienced by Métis children and youth (an increase from last fiscal year)
  - six (less than one per cent) were experienced by Inuit children and youth
  - 15 (one per cent) were experienced by children and youth with no specific information on their Indigenous heritage (an increase from last fiscal year).

Of the 129 in-mandate deaths reported to RCY in 2022/23, 47 (37 per cent) were Indigenous children or youth. Of these deaths, 11 (23 per cent) were Indigenous children or youth in government care.

RCY Reportable Circumstances also provide insight into the nature of critical injuries experienced by children and youth as well as insight into the main causes of death among children and youth. Figures 12 and 13 below show in-mandate critical injuries by type of injury and by cause of death.

**Figure 12 – In-Mandate Critical Injuries by RCY Classification and Gender– 2022/23**

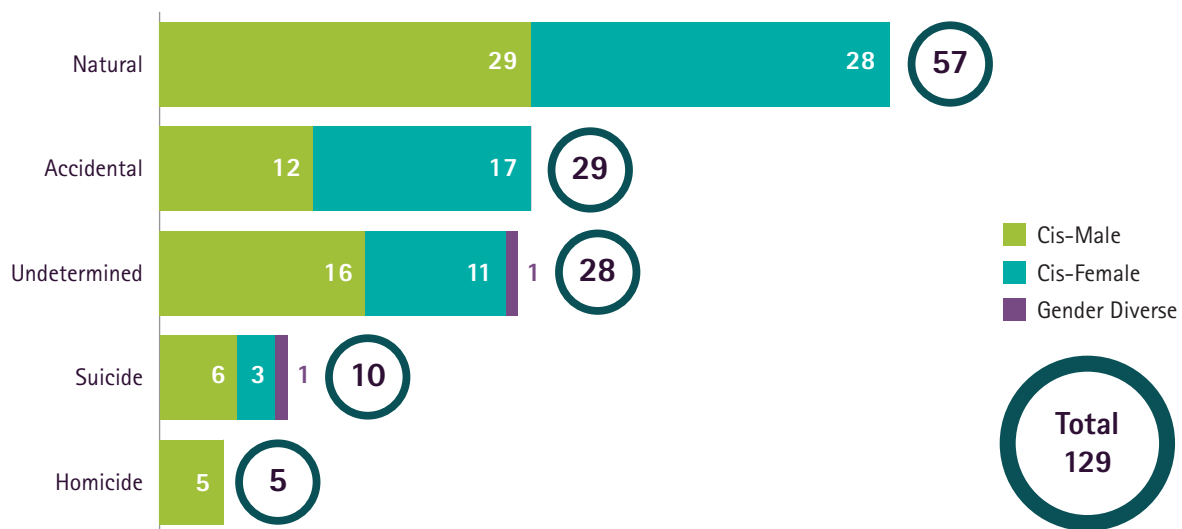


Note to figure: Emotional Harm refers to an incident that may cause an emotional injury to a child/youth. For emotional harm to be considered in-mandate for RCY, it must reasonably be seen as having a potential to cause serious or long-term emotional or psychological harm to the child/youth. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Death of, or injury suffered by, a significant person (parent(s), significant caregiver, sibling, close friend, partner, etc.)
- Mistreatment/inappropriate behaviours by an approved caregiver or usually trusted person
- Witness to traumatic event (such as witness to drug poisoning, murder, etc.).



Figure 13: In-Mandate Deaths by RCY Classification and Gender – 2022/23



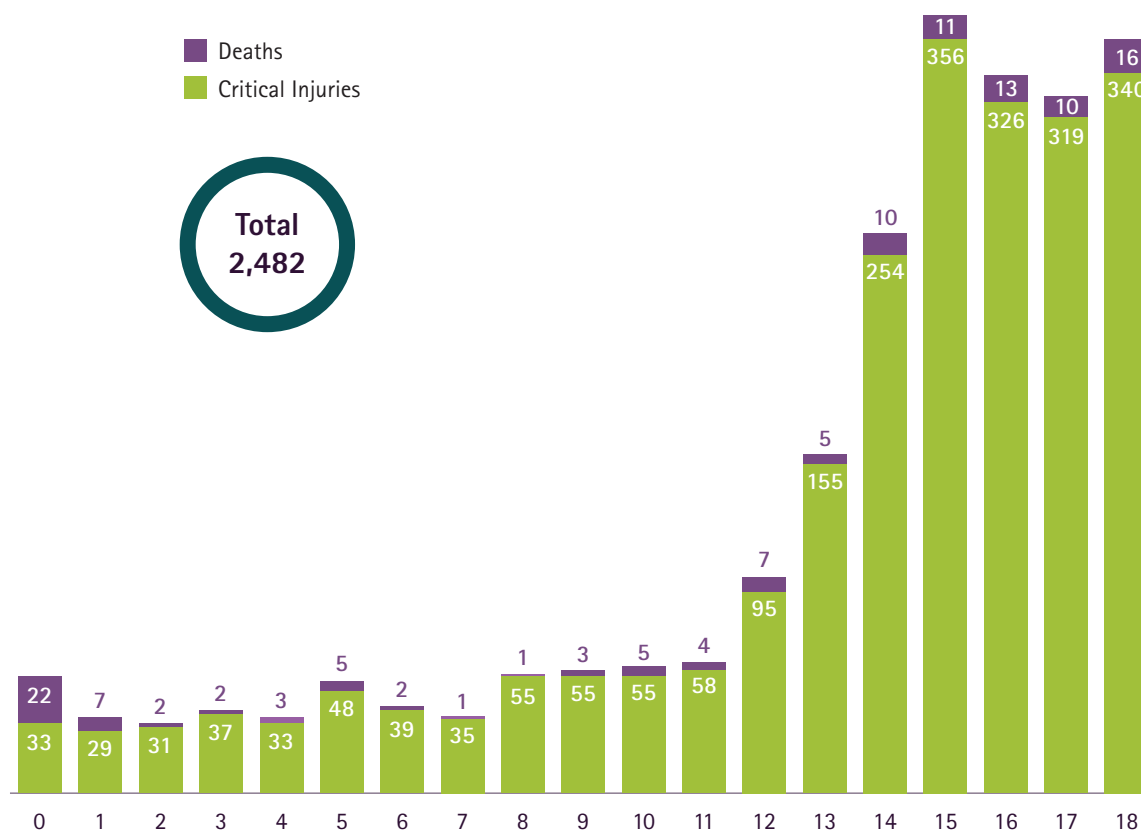
\* A death is noted as undetermined when the Coroner has not determined the cause of death or RCY is awaiting the Coroner's report. A death due to natural causes may result from medical factors such as terminal illness or congenital birth defects.

Of the 29 deaths determined to be accidental, 19 (66 per cent) were related to suspected drug poisoning.

RCY data also provide insight into the ages of children and youth when they experience critical injuries or death. Injuries and deaths trend upward as children enter their middle years and then adolescence.



Figure 14: Age Distribution of In-Mandate Critical Injuries and Deaths – 2022/23



\* Age recorded is the age a young person was when the critical injury or death occurred.

Of all critical injury and death reports received by the Representative in 2022/23:

- Most were experienced by children and youth ages 12 and older. This age group experienced:
  - 77 per cent of total critical injuries and deaths
  - 78 per cent of critical injuries
  - 56 per cent of deaths.
- The highest number of deaths (17 per cent) occurred in infants up to one year of age. This is typically due to congenital conditions contributing to health fragility and premature – but often expected – death.
- The second-highest number of deaths (12 per cent) occurred among 18-year-old youth.



# Appendix 2 – List of Outreach and Communications Activities

## Events, Conferences and Speaking Engagements

Aboriginal Infant Development Program (AIDP) 30 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gathering (August 2022)	Child Legal Representation Conference (October 2022)
Agreement in Principle (AIP) Information Session for First Nations Webinar (June 2022)	Camosun College Speaking Engagement (March 2023)
All Chiefs Meeting: <i>At A Crossroads</i> Presentation (November 2022)	Community Bridge Foster Parent Support Session (May 2022)
BC Alternate Education Association Conference (February 2023)	Connect2Thrive Community Fair (June 2022)
BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs Event (November 2022)	Family Support Institute of BC Advocacy and Allies Training Weekend (April 2022)
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils Annual Conference (April 2022)	Family Support Institute of BC Family Awards Ceremony (April 2022)
BC Coroners Service Media Availability – Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths in B.C. (August 2022)	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks Youth Retreat (March 2023)
BC Foster Parents Association AGM (October 2022)	Federation of Community Social Services of BC June Conference and AGM (June 2022)
BC Government Announcement – Historic Changes to B.C. child-welfare laws lay path to upholding Indigenous jurisdiction (October 2022)	Federation of Community Social Services of BC Social Policy Forum (February 2023)
BC Government Legislative Internship Program Presentation (February 2023)	First Nations Leadership Council Symposium – Indigenous Laws Research Unit and Wet'suwet'en Youth Council (April 2022)
BC Government Select Standing Committee on Health Presentation (July 2022)	Fort Nelson Friendship Centre Youth Drop-In (May 2022)
BC School Trustees Association Q'ushin'til (walking alongside) (April 2022)	Fraser Valley Child Development Centre's 40 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary (October 2022)
BC School Trustees Association Event: From Grief to Medicine: Moving Forward with Good Hearts (April 2022)	Gathering Our Voices – Youth in Care Feast (March 2023)
Board Voice: Resilient Governance Conference (September 2022)	Gathering Our Voices – Self-Advocacy Workshop (March 2023)
Canadian Federation of University Women – Prince George (June 2022)	Gathering Our Voices – Funding Your Future Presentation (March 2023)
Family Caregivers of British Columbia – Family Caregiver Support Groups Support Weekend (August 2022)	Government of B.C. Provincial Tuition Waiver Program Announcement (March 2023)
	Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations Community Engagement (November 2022)



Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations Presentation (November 2022)

His Majesty's Official Opposition Constituency Assistants Presentation (October 2022)

Indigenous Perspectives Society – Aboriginal Social Work Graduation (June 2022 and December 2022)

Indigenous Perspectives Society – Aboriginal Social Work Online Training (November 2022)

Indigenous Perspectives Society – Aboriginal Social Work Training Presentation (June 2022)

Janusz Korczak Association of Canada Medal and Statuette Presentation (October 2022)

Keeping Families Together: Reimagining Indigenous Child Welfare (June 2022)

K'tunaxa Rights Workshop (October 2022)

MCFD Announcement – Payment for Caregivers of Children and Youth (March 2023)

Moosehide Walk at the B.C. Legislature (May 2022)

National AccessAbility Week Kickoff 2022 (May 2022)

National Indigenous Peoples Day 2022 – Holland Park in Surrey (June 2022)

Nenan Dane zaa Deh Zona Family Services Society Rights Education with Dawson Creek Youth (May 2022)

Our Children Our Way – A Forum for Child and Family Well-Being (November 2022)

Our Women are Sacred Event (May 2022)

Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters Event (September 2022)

Provincial Association of Residential and Community Agencies (PARCA) Special Session (March 2023)

Public Sector Innovation Show Presentation (December 2022)

Pink Shirt Day Event (February 2023)

Prince George Youth Custody Services Advocacy Outreach Clinics (Monthly, April 2022 – March 2023)

### *RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project:*

- RCY AYA and TW Project: Boys and Girls Club of Okanagan (April 2022)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: Boys and Girls Club of South Coast (May 2022)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: Community Bridge (May 2022)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: Foundry Provincial (April 2022)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: Fundementors (April 2022)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: RCY/MCFD Practice Meetings (August 2022 and February 2023)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills Campus Navigators Community of Practice (November 2022)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: MCFD Province-wide "Funding Your Future" (April 2022 and July 2022)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: MCFD Province-wide "Post Secondary Access Committee" (April, June, July October, November and December 2022, and January 2023)
- RCY AYA and TW Project: University of Northern B.C. (May 2022)

RCY Legal and Strategic Policy Counsel  
Information Sessions Webinar (October 2022)

### *RCY Outreach Engagement:*

- A Way Home (July 2022)
- Acwsalcta – Nuxalk School (September 2022)
- ARC Programs (August 2022)
- Axis Family Resources (June 2022 and January 2023)
- Bella Coola Community Services Society (September 2022)
- Circle of Indigenous Nations Society (August 2022)



- Community Bridge Foster Parents Series (June 2022 and July 2022)
- Community Living BC (April 2022)
- Community Living BC Cranbrook (August 2022)
- Denisiqi Services Society (September 2022)
- Family and Individual Resource (FAIR) Society (August 2022)
- Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (June 2022)
- Hulitan Family and Community Services (September 2022)
- Interior Community Services (July 2022)
- Island Métis Family and Community Services Society (October 2022)
- Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (July 2022)
- Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services (July 2022)
- Lillooet Friendship Centre Society (July 2022)
- MCFD Ashcroft (July 2022)
- MCFD Bella Coola (September 2022)
- MCFD Castlegar (October 2022)
- MCFD Cranbrook/Creston (October 2022)
- MCFD Cranbrook and Ktunaxa Kinbasket (August 2022)
- MCFD Invermere/Golden (October 2022)
- MCFD Nelson (August 2022)
- Nelson Community Services (August 2022)
- North Okanagan Friendship Centre Society (July 2022)
- North Okanagan Foster Parents Association (July 2022)
- Penticton Indian Band (July 2022)
- Qayqayt First Nation (October 2022)
- Society for Children and Youth (March 2023)
- South Okanagan Foster Parents Association (July 2022)
- South Peace Community Resources Society (May 2022)
- Thompson Rivers University (July 2022)
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre (August 2022)
- Westbank First Nation (July 2022)
- RCY Presentation to MCFD: Learning Circle for Skye's Legacy – A Focus on Belonging (November 2022)
- Road to Safety BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and Battered Women's Support Services Report Release (July 2022)
- Road to Safety: Indigenous Survivors in B.C. Speak out against Intimate Partner Violence Event (August 2022)
- Royal Roads University: Indigenous Peoples Day Event (June 2022)
- Social Justice Summit (January 2023)
- Spring Session Reception at Government House (February 2023)
- Starbright Children's Development Centre Meet & Greet (March 2023)
- Threshold Housing Society Event (June 2022)
- Threshold Housing Society's Youth Harm Reduction Event (June 2022)
- TRRUST Collective Gathering (April, July and October 2022)
- Tsow Tun Le Lum MMIWG Gathering (May 2022)
- University of British Columbia, Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre's Presentation on Gender Diverse Youth – RCY Staff Learning Opportunity (April 2022)
- University of the Fraser Valley, Social Workers Panel Presentation in Honour of Social Work Week (March 2023)
- University of Victoria, Faculty of Law – Children and the Law Presentation (June 2022)
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre LGBTQ2IA+ Youth Gathering (November 2022)



## Meetings

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

Alberta – Office of the Child and Youth Advocate	Family Support Institute of BC
A Way Home Kamloops	Federation of Community Social Services of BC
ACT Community	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
ARC Programs Family Connection Centres	First Call BC
AutismBC	Foundry BC
Autism Support Network of British Columbia	Generation to Generation Society
Axis Family Resources	HIPPY Canada
BC Association for Child Development and Intervention	Inclusion BC
BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs	Interior Community Services
BC Association of Social Workers	Janusz Korczak Association of Canada
BC Disability Collaborative	Manitoba – Child and Youth Advocate
BCEd Access	Nelson Community Services
BC Parents of Complex Kids	Northwest Child Development Centres
Bella Coola Community Services Society	McCreary Centre Society
Boys and Girls Club Okanagan	North Okanagan Foster Parents Association
Boys and Girls Club South Coast	North Okanagan Friendship Centre
Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division	Prince George Youth Custody Services Directors
Caregivers Support Network	Saskatchewan – Child and Youth Advocate
Clements Centre Society	Society for Children and Youth of BC
Ending Violence Association of BC	Starbright Children's Development Centre
Family and Individual Resource Society	TRRUST Collective
	Whitecrow Village

### Indigenous Leadership/Organizations

Aboriginal Housing Management Association	First Nations Health Authority
Aboriginal Infant Development Programs	First Nations Leadership Council
Aboriginal Supported Child Development	Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society
Acwsalecta (Nuxalk School)	Fort Nelson First Nation
All Chiefs Meeting	Gwa'Sala – 'Nakwaxda'xw Nation
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres	Harley Eagle
Carrier Sekani Child and Family Services	Hulitan Family and Community Services
Denisiqi Services Society	Indigenous Child and Family Services Directors
Federation of Sovereign Indian Nations	Executive and Directors ( <i>formerly Delegated Aboriginal Agency</i> )



## APPENDICES

Island Métis Family and Community Services Society  
Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society  
Indigenous Perspectives Society  
Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society  
K'tunaxa  
Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services  
Nenan Dane Zaa Deh Zona Family Services Society  
Nawican Friendship Centre  
North Okanagan Friendship Centre  
Our Children Our Way Steering Committee

Prince George Native Friendship Centre  
Qayqayt First Nation  
Simpco First Nation  
Songhees Nation  
South Island Indigenous Authority  
Surrounded by Cedar  
Tsow Tun Le Lum Cultural Support Services  
Union of BC Indian Chiefs  
Urban Native Youth Association  
Victoria Native Friendship Centre  
Wachiay Friendship Centre Society  
Westbank First Nation

## Government Organizations

Advisory Group on Provincial Assessments  
BC Coroners Service Death Review Panel  
BC Government Employees Union  
BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services  
Burnaby Youth Custody Services Centre  
Children's Forum  
Community Living BC  
Government of B.C. MLAs and Ministers  
Elections BC  
Legislative Assembly of B.C.  
Lieutenant Governor of B.C.  
Members of His Majesty's Official Opposition  
Mental Health Review Board  
Ministry of Attorney General  
Ministry of Children and Family Development  
Ministry of Citizens' Services  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills  
Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
Office of the Auditor General  
Office of the Chief Coroner  
Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner  
Office of the Human Rights Commissioner  
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner  
Office of the Merit Commissioner  
Office of the Ombudsperson  
Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner  
Office of the Provincial Health Officer  
Premier of B.C.  
Provincial Health Services Authority  
Public Guardian and Trustee  
Senior Officials Committee Responsible for Human Rights (SOCHR)



## Other

Access to Justice Strategy Group  
ARC Programs Foundation  
BC Centre on Substance Use  
BC Children's and Women's Hospitals  
BC School Trustees Association  
Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research  
Children's Health Policy Centre, Simon Fraser University (SFU)  
Child and Youth Meaningful Participation Community of Practice  
Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS)  
Greater Victoria School District  
Health Justice  
Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP)  
Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy  
Intersectoral Family Justice Dialogues  
Institute for Fiscal Study and Democracy  
Inside Out

Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, Simon Fraser University (SFU)  
Northern Health Authority  
PARCA  
Peak House  
Public Health Association of BC  
RainCity Housing  
Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, University of British Columbia (UBC)  
Thompson Rivers University  
Three Bridges  
TOMM (The Outcomes Measurement Model)  
TransCare BC  
UBC Okanagan  
University of Northern British Columbia  
University of Victoria  
Vancouver Coastal Health  
Victoria Police Department  
York University

## Contact Information

### Phone

In Victoria: 250-356-6710  
Elsewhere in B.C.: 1-800-476-3933

### Fax

Victoria: 250-356-0837  
Prince George: 250-561-4624

### Text (children and youth)

1-778-404-7161

### Website

[rcybc.ca](http://rcybc.ca)


### Chat (children and youth)

[rcybc.ca/get-help-now/chat](http://rcybc.ca/get-help-now/chat)


### E-mail

[rcy@rcybc.ca](mailto:rcy@rcybc.ca)

### Social Media

 B.C.'s Representative  
for Children and Youth

 Rep4Youth

 @rcybc and @rcybcyouth

 @rcybcyouth

### Offices

Suite 400, 1019 Wharf St.  
Victoria, B.C.  
V8W 3Y9

1475 – 10th Avenue  
Prince George, B.C.  
V2L 2L2



REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH