



A Voice for Youth

MEDIA RELEASE

January 30, 2012

Saskatchewan Youth Collin Starblanket Part of Youth Delegation to United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

SASKATOON — Fifteen-year-old Collin Joseph Starblanket from the Star Blanket Cree Nation in Saskatchewan has been selected by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada as a First Nations Youth Ambassador for Canada. He will be part of a six-member youth delegation departing for a special session of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, Switzerland on February 1, 2012.

The Children's Advocate Office is sponsoring this special opportunity for Collin, who will be accompanied by his Uncle, Wendell Starr, on his first trip outside of North America. Collin was selected in early December after submitting an essay on First Nations treaty rights to social, education and health services, and completing an interview with the Caring Society panel.

"It's hard not to get too excited," said Collin. "But I cannot wait to represent my First Nation, Saskatchewan and Canada at the United Nations, and bring words of encouragement back to our Aboriginal youth that their treaty and human rights will be respected and supported by the international community."

Canada ratified the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in December 1991. This obligates the federal government to periodically report to the United Nations on measures adopted by Canadian governments to respect and ensure the rights in the Convention to all children and youth without discrimination of any kind. On February 6, 2012, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child will consider Canada's third and fourth periodic reports along with submissions made by child and youth advocates from across the country.

As a partner in the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA), the Children's Advocate Office contributed to a *Special Report on Aboriginal Children – Canada Must Do Better: Today and Tomorrow*, which was submitted to the Committee in the fall of 2011. The Caring Society and partner KAIROS have also submitted an alternate report, *Honouring the Children*, which details the continuing inequities in on and off reserve supports for child welfare, health and education services.

Collin is no stranger to a big stage. He started dancing fancy as a toddler and singing at the age of five. He has performed in cultural festivals and events, at Roughrider half-time shows, and for royalty during Prince Charles' most recent trip to Regina. Collin volunteered and shared his passion for song and dance with other youth in Saskatchewan at the Ranch Erhlo Society from 2008-09. In 2010, he was recognized with the Sasktel Aboriginal Youth Award of Excellence for Culture.

"I would like to bring words of encouragement to all youth, so that they see and hear that they too can lead a clean way of life that can be rewarded as I have been," said Collin. "I speak from the heart and want to inspire the members of my First Nation and other youth."

Collin's pursuits also extend to consciously serving as a role model in his community. He was voted as a youth spokesperson for the Star Blanket First Nation, was chosen as the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council Youth Representative for four years and is a team member of the Council's Youth Action Plan (Y.A.P.). He also is a part of the "Sensational Six" Youth in Motion Team for Saskatchewan and was chosen as one of the Prairie Valley School Division's Aboriginal Youth Role Models for Balcarres School.

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For more resources visit:

www.saskcao.ca
(Children's Advocate Office)

www.fnfcfs.com
(First Nations Child and Family Caring Society)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm>
(United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child)

<http://www.pch.gc.ca/ddp-hrd/docs/crc-eng.cfm>
(Government of Canada United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)