



SASKATCHEWAN
advocate
FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH



ANNUAL REPORT **2018**



Letter of Transmittal

April 30, 2019

The Honourable Mark Docherty
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina SK S4S 0B3

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with section 39 of *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*, it is my duty and privilege to submit to you and members of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan this Annual Report from the Advocate for Children and Youth for the year 2018.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corey O'Soup".

Corey O'Soup
Advocate for Children and Youth

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MESSAGE FROM THE ADVOCATE


I am pleased to present this 2018 Annual Report that not only showcases the amazing work of my staff, but also the initiative and passion of the individuals in our province who are supporting our young people. The connections we have made this year have shown me that there are thousands of dedicated people who are helping change the lives of children and youth across Saskatchewan. The key to success is partnerships and action! Working together to implement innovative and creative programs to ensure that the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth are respected and valued is paramount.

In 2018 we continued in the strategic direction set out in 2016. We focused a considerable amount of our resources advocating for improved mental health services for children and youth. Work in this area will continue in 2019/20 as I will be releasing a special report on mental health. In keeping the momentum of change at the fore, my office will also proudly host a youth-led conference in May 2019, where young people will speak on the topic of mental health. I hope that by providing a platform for their voice and for their experiences to be heard, the knowledge these young people share will influence the decisions our leaders make regarding supports and services across the province.

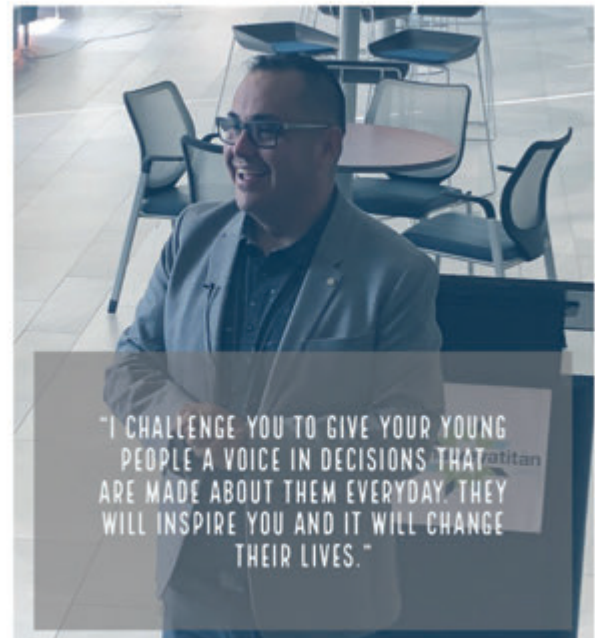
Building relationships, both on and off reserve, has been incredibly important to realizing our vision and goals. My staff and I have travelled to all four corners of the province to meet face to face with young people, families, communities, and leadership. We've visited numerous schools and facilities to engage directly with children and youth. We have also increased our presence on social media to reach young people where they are and continue to educate ourselves on how to engage them through these forums.

The above efforts have resulted in a marked increase in people contacting our office for consultation and assistance in addressing the challenges they are facing. This report highlights the struggles, some long-standing, that children and youth around the province experience. There is much more to tackle. However, by bringing together ideas and resources, we can set the stage for innovative action to occur at all levels. Improving conditions for children and youth has far-reaching impacts, benefiting not only the young people, but their families, communities, and the province as a whole.

Respectfully submitted,



Corey O'Soup
Saskatchewan's Advocate for Children and Youth



COREY O'SOUP
SASKATCHEWAN ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

THE FOUNDATION OF THE ADVOCATE'S WORK

Our mandate is defined by
The Advocate for Children and Youth Act.

We do:

ADVOCACY on behalf of children and youth receiving services from a provincial ministry, direct or delegated agency or publicly-funded health entity.

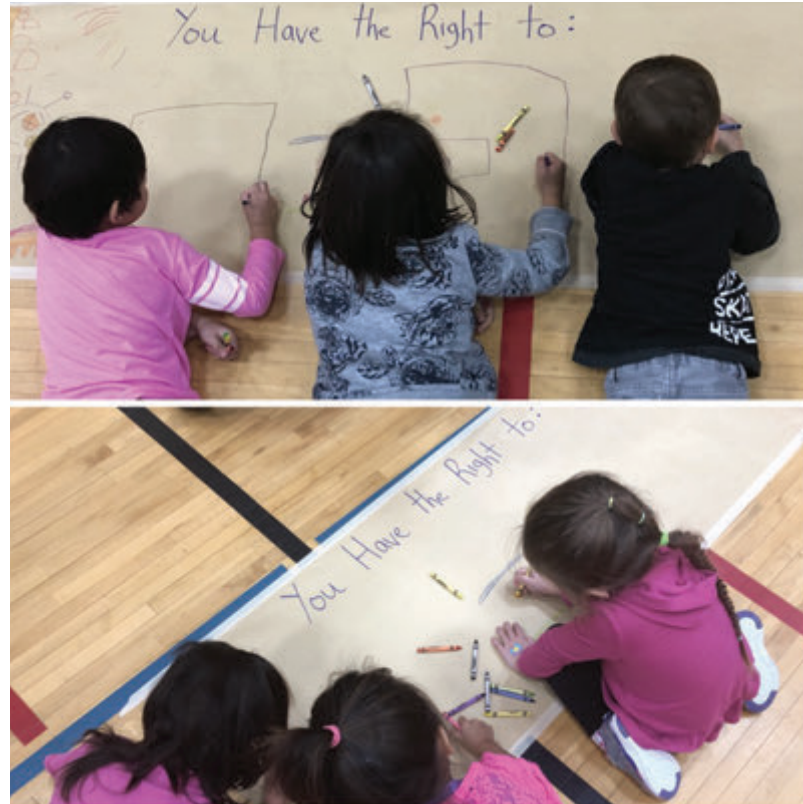
INVESTIGATIONS into any matter concerning, or services provided to, children and youth by a provincial ministry, direct or delegated agency or publicly funded health entity.

PUBLIC EDUCATION to raise awareness of the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth.

RESEARCH AND ADVISE on any matter relating to the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth.

These functions are all interconnected and support the overarching goal to create systemic change for the benefit of the young people in Saskatchewan.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.



OUR MISSION:

Empowering children and youth to be change-makers.

OUR VALUES:

- Place children and youth first
- Respect First Nations and Métis language and culture
- Embrace reconciliation
- Provide accessible, fair, appropriate and timely services
- Inclusive of all

OUR VISION:

The rights, well-being, and voice of children and youth are respected and valued.

OUR FUNDAMENTAL GOAL:

To be part of solutions that result in positive change in the quality of life for First Nations and Métis children and youth.

A FOUNDATION OF RIGHTS

Our work is guided by the following principles:

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

All people have human rights. Children and youth require special protections because many decisions are made on their behalf by adults. In 1991, Canada ratified the UNCRC – a legally-binding international instrument that guarantees these special protections.

The UNCRC has 54 articles protecting children's rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services. The four core principles of the UNCRC are:

- Non-discrimination
- Best interests of the child
- Right to life, survival and development
- Respect for the views of the child

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (UNDRIP)

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is guided by the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations which recognizes and affirms Indigenous people's inherent rights. The UNDRIP references 46 articles that speak about rights to:

- Land
- Culture and language
- Self-determination
- Non-discriminatory or oppressive practices
- Protection of elders, women, and children
- Right to survive and develop
- Liberty and freedom
- Participate in any decision that affects Indigenous people

Article 21 and 22 specifically reference that attention shall be paid to the continuing improvement of the social and economic conditions as pertains to the special needs of elders, women, youth and children. It also references that the 'State', in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take measures to ensure Indigenous women and children are afforded special protections.



SASKATCHEWAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH FIRST PRINCIPLES

Our office distilled the 54 articles of the UNCRC into those most applicable to Saskatchewan. These principles were adopted by the provincial government in 2009 and include the following:

- Those rights defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Participate and be heard before any decision affecting them is made.
- Have their best interests given paramount consideration in any action or decision involving them.
- An equal standard of care, protection and services.
- The highest standard of health and education possible to reach their fullest potential.
- Safety and protection from all forms of physical, emotional and sexual harm, while in the care of parents, governments, legal guardians or any person.
- Be treated as the primary client, and at the centre of all child-serving systems.
- Have consideration given to the importance of their unique life history and spiritual traditions and practices, in accordance with their stated views and preferences.

TOUCHSTONES OF HOPE FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

The Touchstones of Hope, as created by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, are a guide to reconciliation in a variety of sectors in which children are served. The Touchstones of Hope promote relating, restoring, truth telling and acknowledging.

The process is based on five principles:

- Self-determination
- Respect for culture and language
- Importance of structural intervention
- Non-discrimination
- Holistic approach



SUPPORTING SASKATCHEWAN'S YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH INNOVATIVE ACTION

In the 2017 Annual Report, the Advocate introduced the office's five-year strategic plan that set out four priorities to align with our focus on prevention, early intervention and solution focused practice (See Figure 1). Using a collaborative approach with communities, our provincial, First Nations and Métis governments, and the young people of this province, has proven rewarding. Through our strengthened relationships we continue to gain knowledge, valuable insight, and hear the voice of amazing youth throughout Saskatchewan. These positive relationships have been a major contributing factor to addressing our priorities and has led to many strong allies in helping children and youth, especially in the areas of appropriate education and access to mental health services. Many times, children and youth are at the mercy of the decisions made by their parents/caregivers, families, communities and, most of all, the systems that serve them. By bringing their voices to the decision-making tables, we are ensuring every effort is made to help them reach their full potential, now and for generations to come.

Figure 1

- Foster positive relationships with our First Nations and Métis partners.
- Ensure our education system is appropriate for all children and youth and meets the unique needs of First Nation and Métis children, youth, and their families.
- Ensure children and youth have access to adequate and appropriate mental health services.
- Ensure children and youth are supported and empowered to use their voice and to be advocates within their communities.

This annual report provides a snapshot of our work during the year and serves as a resource for those who work with young people. The Advocate's focus continues to be on showcasing various innovative and creative programs that are having positive results in achieving improved outcomes for the children and youth involved. By raising awareness of the issues, and shining a light on engaging and effective initiatives, we hope to connect people in various communities to share their ideas, resources, and experiences. Developing relationships and working together to implement programs will strengthen not only the young people, but all of Saskatchewan.

No TIME TO WAIT: Prioritizing Child and Youth Mental Health

UNCRC
ARTICLE 24:
ACCESS TO
HEALTH
AND HEALTH
SERVICES

In 2018 the Advocate's work centered on youth mental health services in Saskatchewan, which continues to be a longstanding issue. The Advocate has been vocal on the access to adequate and timely services for children and youth, triggered by both the extreme wait times, particularly for psychiatric services, and from our own research, resulting in the report entitled, *Shhh...LISTEN!! We Have Something to Say! Youth Voices from the North*. This work has also led our office to take inventory of the past five years with respect to the services provided including a review of the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan.

In December 2014 Saskatchewan's 10-year Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan was released by an independent commission, led by Dr. Fern Stockdale Winder. The Action Plan intended to identify what was working well and what needed improvement in mental health and addictions services in Saskatchewan.

The Action Plan concluded that "there is a need to decrease wait times for services and find innovative ways to service individuals and families in rural and remote communities." It also emphasized that focusing on prevention and early intervention for children and youth would reduce the incidence of adult mental health and addictions.

The Government of Saskatchewan fully endorsed the 16 recommendations of the Action Plan, and created cross-ministry initiatives to support them, involving Education, Justice, Corrections and Policing, Health and Social Services.

Since the release of the Action Plan, the Advocate has repeatedly heard that accessing the right services, at the right time, continues to be an ongoing struggle. The issue of timely access is a chronic challenge, especially for children and youth residing in isolated communities. The staggering suicide rates and ongoing suicide crisis in northern Saskatchewan is indicative of a lack of readily available mental health resources in these communities. Our experience tells us that mental health service providers often lack the supports and resources to provide the level of services needed. The Advocate recognizes the many initiatives and strategic plans of the Government in addressing some of these issues, yet far too many children and youth face unreasonable wait times or the absence of services altogether.

Starting in fall of 2018, the Advocate started to fully examine these issues by asking children, youth, their caregivers, and professionals about their lived experiences in accessing or providing mental health and addiction services. Our inquiry is meant to shed light on the disconnect between the user experience and the Government initiatives. The Advocate has committed to a special report in the coming year that outlines the findings of this work. While the preliminary information gathered finds there are still significant gaps to address, the Government of Saskatchewan's announcement to pilot the Mental Health Capacity Building in Schools program, is a step in the right direction.

This model focuses on partnering and collaboration to bring mental health services and education to children and youth in schools. As part of the Advocate's commitment to bring promising solutions to governments and leaders, our office researched this model in Alberta and then subsequently shared information about this initiative with officials from the Ministries of Health and Education. We further advocated for the implementation of the program in our province. The Advocate was pleased to hear that the Government of Saskatchewan's 2018-2019 budget committed to piloting this initiative. Preparations were made in 2018 to begin pilot projects in selected schools in 2019. Our office



will be monitoring the progress of this initiative and look forward to seeing how these pilots build capacity in communities and bring greater mental health services to children in a practical way, at school, where they spend most of their days.

We were also encouraged by the Ministry of Health's response after we raised the concern of lengthy wait times for child and youth psychiatry in Saskatoon. As a direct result of our advocacy, an internal review of services was conducted and a move to an integrated, team-based model (triage nurse, mental health nurses, social workers, and psychiatrists) was initiated. The result has been expedited services and a notable reduction in wait times for children and youth in that city. Our office will continue to monitor and advocate for a wider distribution of the model and investment to increase access in rural and Northern locations as well.

Over the last year, we have met with the Chief Executive Officer plus officials in nine regions of the Saskatchewan Health Authority, and with Health Directors and staff providing health services in four First Nations communities, to build relationships and raise awareness on the mandate of our office. We have also conducted a significant number of presentations specific to the findings of our *Shhh...LISTEN!! We Have Something to Say! Youth Voices from the North* report. Various organizations and communities have utilized this report as a guide and have consulted with our office when developing strategic plans, education curriculum, and resources to address mental health and suicide in their communities.

We have also learned that the international community has identified Indigenous suicide as a crisis requiring serious attention. As a result of the findings and Calls to Action from the *Shhh...LISTEN!!* report, the Advocate was invited, along with the Alberta Child and Youth Advocate, to represent the Canadian Council for Child and Youth Advocates¹ (CCCYA) in Bogotá, Colombia at a special session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on the situation of Indigenous people's rights in Canada. In that forum, the Advocate was asked to share the Youth Calls to Action from the report with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Following that appearance, the Advocate was invited to Washington, D.C. by the IACHR and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) (regional body of the World Health Organization) to further discuss the solutions put forward by our youth at an expert meeting on Indigenous People's Health in the Americas. The purpose of this event was to seek recommendations for a joint initiative by the IACHR and PAHO to bridge the gaps in access to quality health services (including mental health services) for Indigenous communities. Additionally, the Advocate presented the *Shhh...LISTEN!!* report findings at the World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference in Perth, Australia to share the Youth Calls to Action with Indigenous groups, researchers, program planners, and mental health professionals. The voices of the youth in our report have been heard across the province, the country and the globe, and concrete improvements are being made as a result.

In this last year, our office also embarked on leading a report that compiles the findings of the work of several of our national counterparts, all members of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, on the topic of youth suicide and the crisis across the country. This national report, to be released in fall of 2019, will have recommendations to support the need for a unified response toward addressing mental health and suicide, given its significant impact on children and youth throughout Canada.



¹ The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates is a national body of Advocates and Representatives for children and youth in nine provinces and two territories and who hold legislative mandates to advocate for the rights of children and youth.

12 MONTHS

since
"Shhh...
Listen!!"
report was
released.

BOOM!

our website
literally
CRASHED
the day of
the release.

50+

of
presentations to
communities in
Saskatchewan
and across
the country.

10,000+

of paper
copies
distributed

Shhh... **LISTEN!!**

We Have Something to Say:
Youth Voices from the North

YOUR VOICE IS BEING HEARD!

33,579

of
complete
downloads
of your
report



INFINITY

of lives this
report can
positively
impact

402,119
of hits on
your report.
That is almost
half a million
people from
around the
globe!

To read the report go to:
saskadvocate.ca

Share on:  
mention @saskadvocate

ADULTS

are not only
listening and
talking about
your report, they
are using it to
teach students in
classrooms!

PINEHOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

Youth and adults alike from Pinehouse Lake in northern Saskatchewan attest to the therapeutic benefits of photography, recently introduced into their community. Dre Erwin, a Registered Nurse with Additional Authorized Practice and employed with the Saskatchewan Health Authority, began working fulltime at Pinehouse Lake approximately two years ago. The move represented a turning point in his life that came from his own profound experience with a camera; he discovered the beauty, wonder, and healing impact of the northern lights. After engaging in night time photography and posting the pictures on social media, some youth approached Dre with questions about the northern lights and taking pictures. The Pinehouse Photography Club (PPC) was established after recognizing the therapeutic characteristics of photography from his lived experience and knowing its potential to improve the mental health of young people in the community.

“It gives me inspiration. Hope – a group that doesn’t drink. We motivate and encourage each other.”

- Youth quote

“Photography saved me and my daughter for me. It has helped me to be able to show other people to see the beauty. For my daughter she had depression and it helped her realize that she matters and boosted up her self-esteem.”

- Adult quote

Akin to art therapy, photography is another option when conventional therapies may not be a good fit. Dre works closely with the mental health therapist who sees the value and makes referrals to PPC for youth who are struggling with addictions or mental health issues and are not comfortable talking about their problems. Some club members have been able to draw from photography during a period of in-patient treatment at nearby Recovery Lake. Like so many Indigenous youth throughout Canada, many of the children and youth of Pinehouse Lake are acutely feeling the generational effects and trauma of residential schools. Photography is a viable model for youth who may have experienced some trauma, especially in the critical stage of transitioning to adulthood. The gaps in mental health services for this age group is a province-wide issue, so a deeper understanding of the use of photography and the ability to mitigate the risk of youth suicide and reduce stigma is crucial.

Pinehouse Lake youth have indicated that photography is a healthy outlet that helps with feeling lost or depressed. Looking at the beauty of nature through the camera lens generates appreciation for what they have instead of focusing on the negative. As one youth explained, “Every time I go out there, I’m in awe because I completely forgot how it looks...” Youth also post their pictures on social media and receive positive feedback which enhances feelings of self-esteem and self-worth.





“ I’m also thankful for Dre coming to this community out of ALL other communities he came to this one and helped so much by doing and who knows maybe he even saved lives doing this so I’m really, really, really, thankful. Makes me wish other communities had this. ”

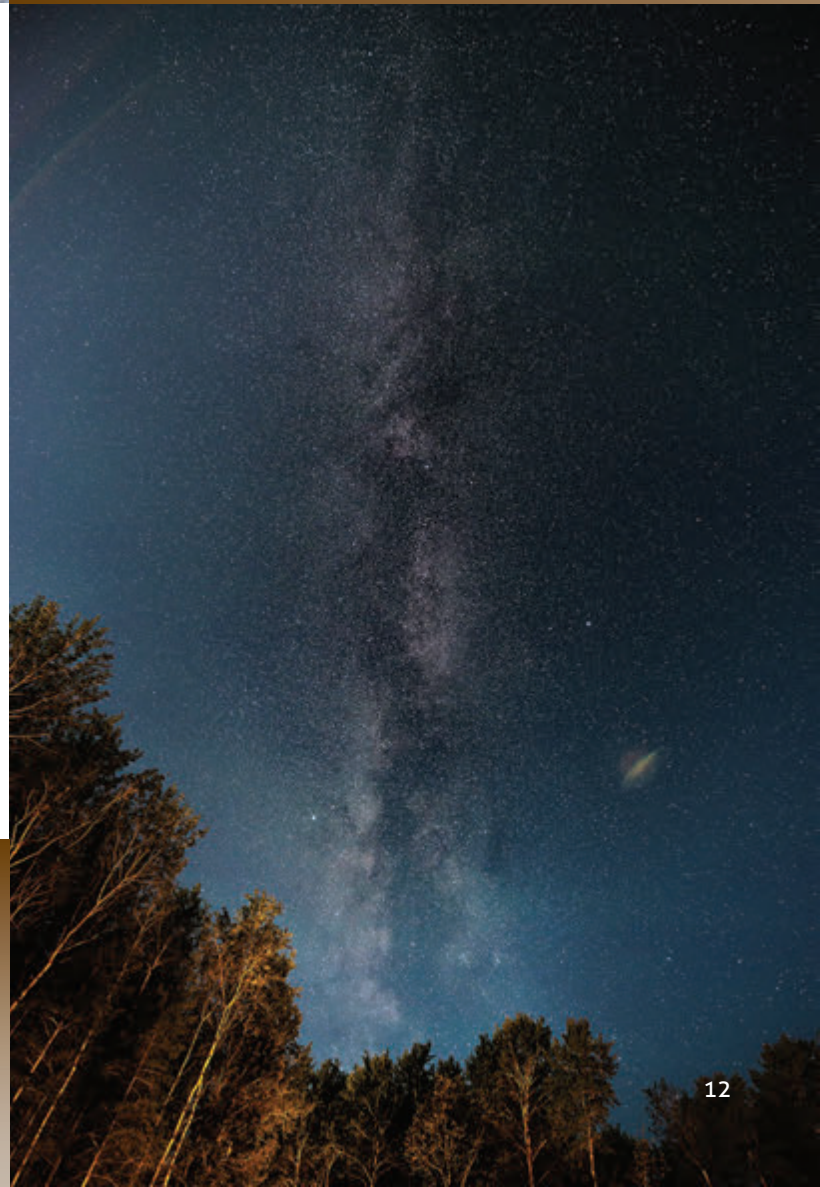
- Youth quote

Additionally, PPC responds positively to the human need to belong. The club members thrive in the group activities that involve learning about photography and going to nature with cameras in hand, then reviewing, editing and posting pictures. PPC is a supportive group that not only connects the individuals, but there is also a sense of connectedness to the larger community. As Dre explained, “...it was actually Trisha Natomagan’s idea to do a beauty pageant for teenagers in town to help increase their self-esteem.” Club members have provided photography services for events such as elders gatherings or hockey games which connects them to others in the community.

The PPC provides support and inclusion to young people making it easy to recognize the amazing healing potential photography can provide to address and prevent mental health problems for youth.

“ Taking pictures of the beauty of nature. It helps me when I get depressed. ”

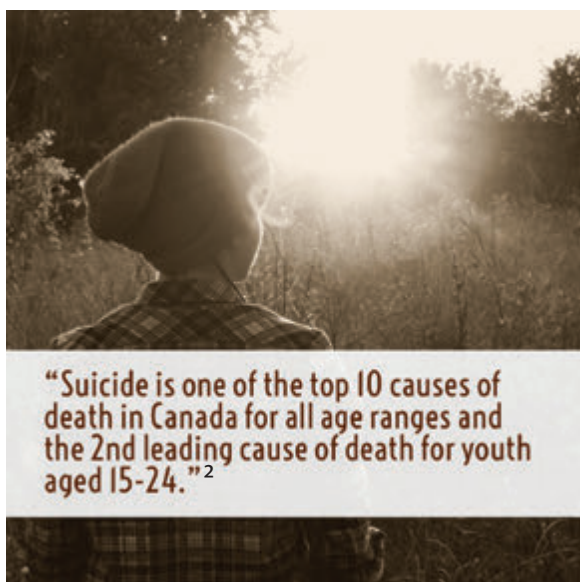
- Youth quote



SIGNS OF SUICIDE PROGRAM

In the winter of 2016 Prairie South School Division's Mental Health and Addictions team and Holy Trinity Catholic Division were approached by Journey to Hope about implementing a suicide screening program in their high schools. Journey to Hope is a volunteer group in Moose Jaw who work to raise awareness and prevention of suicide in all ages. The group is utilizing an American program called the Signs of Suicide (SOS) which provides both education and screening for students.

The team agreed to implement the program with grade nine students in the 2017-2018 school year. Ninth grade was chosen as students are transitioning to a new school and the health curriculum includes the topic of traumatic death and suicide. In fall of 2017 the grade nine health teachers and counsellors from both school divisions, along with the mental health and addictions workers from Five Hills Health, met to learn about the program and how it would be implemented. Over the course of the 2017-2018 year, the teams in both divisions screened approximately 350 grade nine students for at-risk behaviors associated with suicide.



A key component of the program is the education portion. Students watch a video that teaches them about the signs of suicide and the teacher then facilitates a discussion to review the material. The program encourages students to inform a trusted adult if they have concerns about themselves or someone else. The intent is that youth will be more equipped to recognize the signs that indicate a person is at risk of suicide and that they know who to go to for support. After finishing the education component, the students complete a brief risk screener.

Professionals involved with the program say it is amazing to see how honest the students are in the screening portion, with many students speaking to supports and trusted adults within their schools. Parents are contacted if there are concerns and are provided information on where to seek support. This includes access to a website with free resources regarding information on risky behaviors. Parents have responded with much appreciation and gratitude when contacted.

In fall of 2018, the program expanded to include more students in the rural areas of Prairie South School Division and the Catholic and Public Collegiates in Moose Jaw.

SOS is a great example of developing partnerships to implement proactive solutions. It is effective in connecting youth and their families to supports prior to a crisis occurring. Best of all, SOS is a program that is empowering youth to help themselves and their peers.

“Saskatchewan has the highest rate of youth suicide among the provinces, exceeded only by the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.”³

mentalhealthscreening.org/programs/youth

² Mental Health Commission of Canada (2017). Suicide Prevention. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>

³ The Conference Board of Canada. (February 2015). Suicides: Provincial and Territorial Ranking. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/health/suicide.aspx#ftn10-ref>

ADVO-KIDS

In spring of 2018 several seventh-grade students at George Lee School in Regina sent letters to the Advocate. We were told the class was nicknamed the "Advo-Kids" because they are "*kids advocating for kids*." After learning about mental health, the students were determined to raise awareness and advocate for a better government response.

Their letters to our office mentioned the long wait times before receiving services, the lack of supports readily available to children and youth, and the high rates of suicide for Indigenous youth. One student's letter stated, "Our goal is to improve mental health supports for Saskatchewan children and especially Indigenous youth. We are all human and we should be cared for regardless of our race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender." Students also shared their personal journeys with mental health and navigating the system, and the desire for other young people not having to "go through what I went through."

Our staff met with the students to learn more about their goals, to educate them about their rights and to encourage them to keep speaking out. In June 2018 we were honoured to walk alongside the Advo-Kids as they marched to the Legislature in Regina.



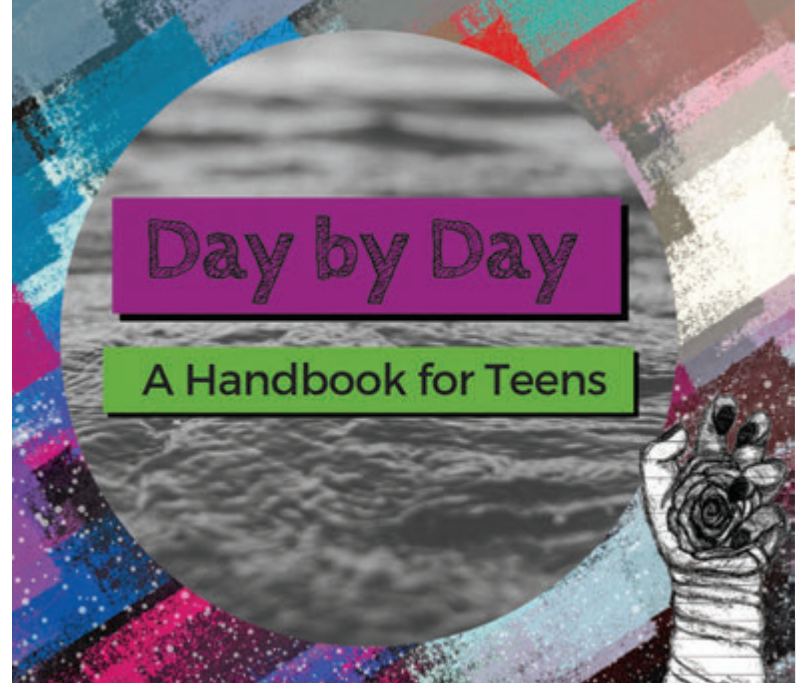
Having spent weeks raising awareness amongst their school community and writing letters to the provincial government asking for improved mental health supports for youth, these young students courageously stood on the steps of the Legislature, in front of media, MLA's and community members, to deliver a loud and clear message. The Advo-Kids made their voices heard as they chanted, "We are in despair, for mental health care."

Being empowered to use their voice to speak out for equality and a high standard of care will have a lifelong impact on these students and demonstrates how young people can be change-makers!

SURVIVOR 101 PROGRAM

Survivor 101 is a program for students offered in five partnering Saskatoon high schools that is supported by CFS Saskatoon. Survivor 101 groups meet weekly and are a safe space for students to share, discuss and learn with other students and the group facilitator about a wide variety of issues and topics related to health and relationships, and how to navigate life as a teen. Some topics that are often covered include: anxiety, stress, addiction, self harm, depression, relationships, and goal setting. During group meetings, these topics are explored through discussion, art and activities. Following their first publication, Survival 101 Handbook, the students recently completed their Day by Day Handbook, which is a compilation of work that features poems, artwork, and stories that is solution focused and meant to help young people find their way through the various issues or situations they face on a regular basis. Our office attended a special launch of their Day by Day Handbook and can see how innovative actions like this provide young people with a platform to be part of the solutions that drive real change. CFS Saskatoon has distributed nearly 1800 copies to students in 2018 and the Handbook is available to students by contacting CFS Saskatoon directly. Programs like Survivor 101 are critical in providing youth with space and support to reach their full potential and to recognize their right to fully participate in initiatives that create meaningful change.

This is another example of how young people are change-makers and can steer us in the right direction!



VOICES OF CHANGE-MAKERS: Engagement With Young People

UNCRC
ARTICLE 12:
RESPECT THE
VIEWS OF
THE CHILD

In 2018 our office spent significant time and resources engaging the young people of Saskatchewan. Sadly, many children and youth we meet have limited knowledge on their rights under the UNCRC. Equally unfortunate is how few of these young people have had genuine opportunities to provide their voice in matters that affect them. Both are vitally important. We can no longer exclude young people from participating and speaking out about what is meaningful to them, about what they need to be safe and healthy, and about what they need from us to create pathways to change. When we include young people in the creation of positive social movement and action, great changes can happen.

According to Walking the Talk: A Toolkit for Engaging Youth in Mental Health⁴ spearheaded by the Ontario Center of Excellence For Child and Youth Mental Health, youth engagement improves critical thinking, increases coping mechanisms and well-being, strengthen resiliency, promotes personal growth and identity development, improves academic performance and decreases drop-out rates, broadens and strengthens social networks, and enhances leadership skills.

Child and youth engagement are critical to creating healthy families and communities. Through empowering young people and providing opportunities for them to share their opinions, we foster an excitement and investment in matters that are relevant to them. We increase the success of educational programming, recreational and community development, personal relationships and effective service delivery when input from young people is included. The programs that are creating lasting effective change for children and youth are coming from the ideas of young people. We are truly inspired by the insight and solutions our young people continually challenge us with.

Working from this perspective, and knowing we are losing far too many of our young people to suicide, the Advocate made the decision to provide a large-scale forum for young people to

share their knowledge and expertise about mental health. In 2018 we brought together a youth committee, which partnered with our staff, to begin the process of planning a conference led by young people. The goal of this conference is to have adults from around Saskatchewan listen to the experiences of youth who have dealt with mental health issues and who are working creatively to address it. Our target audience ranges from front line service providers, to elected officials, to those in the private sector, all of who can influence meaningful change. The conference, entitled, '*Now in My Day – Our Issues, Our Voice, Our Time*' will take place May 9 and 10, 2019 in Saskatoon.

~~NOW~~ **BACK IN MY DAY** OUR ISSUES, OUR VOICE, OUR TIME

Youth-led Mental Health Event | May 9-10, 2019 | Saskatoon, SK.

By being a voice for young people, and by supporting and providing a platform for them to speak out about issues that are important to them, we can see the hope and strength in a way that we would not have otherwise seen. We will maintain our pathway of engaging with young people in all areas and scope of our work. This past year we spent time in 73 communities, 60 schools, 48 group homes, five youth custody facilities, and three mental health and addictions treatment facilities, meeting directly with children and youth whenever possible. We advocate to ensure they are receiving the services and supports to which they are entitled to, but we also educate and empower them to be self advocates. These young people are a wealth of knowledge and have a strong desire to be leaders and change-makers. Whether they stand alone or rally in groups, are young adults or elementary school students, we continue to see their passion driving change in our communities.

⁴ Walking the Talk: A Toolkit for Engaging Youth in Mental Health. The Ontario Center of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health: <http://www.yetoolkit.ca/content/benefits-youth>

CANOE LAKE YOUTH CONFERENCE AND ROUND DANCE

After losing some of their young people to suicide, Canoe Lake First Nation rallied together to find ways to strengthen and empower their youth. One of the ways they achieve this is through an annual conference; planned by the youth, for the youth.

Canoe Lake First Nation Chief and Council assist in securing funding, but the young people take the lead in organizing the conference, and decide how the funding will be utilized.

The planning process begins in September, at the start of the school year. Along with some adult allies, students from grade seven to twelve are invited to be part of the conference planning committee, who then become known as "the Grey Shirts" - a name bestowed on them because of the grey t-shirts they wear. The shirts allow the committee members to be easily recognized as the conference organizers, but also gives the youth a strong sense of pride and accomplishment. The Grey Shirts develop the conference theme and determine the topics covered in the workshops.

The 12th annual conference was held in November 2018 and was hosted by the Canoe Lake Miksiw School. Our office was honoured to receive an invitation to attend and to present on youth rights and our *Shhh...LISTEN!! We Have Something to Say! Youth Voices from the North* report. Other workshop topics included treaties, intergenerational trauma, suicide prevention, sexual health, bullying/social media, addictions, art therapy, and fiddling.



The first day began with a Pipe Ceremony and a Grand Entry with dignitaries and the Grey Shirts. This was an opportunity for the youth to recognize the support of the adult allies, and to honor their cultural traditions and homeland by carrying out the Treaty 10 flag. Elected leadership and visiting dignitaries were given the opportunity to say opening remarks and a prayer.

The 2018 conference expanded beyond Canoe Lake to also include students from nearby schools from La Plonge, English River First Nation, Cole Bay, Ministikwan, Buffalo River Dené Nation, Jan's Bay, Pinehouse, Waterhen Lake First Nation and Buffalo Narrows.

At the conclusion of the youth conference, the Canoe Lake community hosted a "Honouring Our Youth" round dance. A ceremony was held to honour the young hunters' first kill; a rite of passage in this community during their annual fall hunt, of which youth participate and are taught the protocol and ways of the land as they hunt. The hunters, their parents and caregivers were brought to the front of the hall and were smudged as everyone stood while an honour song was sung for them. Each hunter was then presented with a gift.

Canoe Lake First Nation has been successful in bridging traditional customs and modern means to empower their young people.



ENGAGING YOUTH Through Social Media

The Advocate believes one of the best ways to reach young people is through social media. In fall 2018 the office hired a Social Media Specialist to strategize, reach and engage with children and youth through the creation of dynamic social media content and campaigns. In addition to our Twitter and Facebook channels, we added Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube to our platform use.

Since youth use social media as a conversation space and given the large amount of time they spend online, social media platforms are excellent tools to reach them and to provide a forum for young people to give feedback on issues that matter to them most. By having the youth share their voice to a large audience across the province, adults can gain a better understanding of what it is like to be a young person today.



Each social media channel works in a unique way and therefore has its own strategy and goals. For instance, YouTube is ranked as the best network for youth mental health. In a recent successful YouTube campaign, we had youth share their video messages on this topic. This provided an opportunity for them to be positive role models to others, to be changemakers! Another exciting

initiative for the YouTube channel is video documenting the Advocate and our staff as they travel across Saskatchewan educating the public about our mission and letting young people know about their rights and self-advocacy.



Contest campaigns at live events promoted through SnapChat and Instagram have also been effective tools that have grown the numbers of youth 'following' us and resulted in high participation and engagement rates.

Through our evaluation of social media analytics, we can measure our efforts and gain insights on audience, content and performance. We can then make strategic decisions when creating content and campaigns, based on the results of reach, performance and engagement.

Over the past four months our office has increased its youth audience and engagement on social media. By staying current with social media trends, and creating visually pleasing and media rich content, we can capture the attention of young people, provide helpful resources, and hear directly from them.

Social media allows us to empower Saskatchewan's young people to be self-advocates and to help other youth who may be going through a similar situation.

Connect with us on social media:
[@saskadvocate](https://www.instagram.com/saskadvocate)



OUT SASKATOON AND CAMP FYREFLY

OUT Saskatoon began as Gay and Lesbian Health Services in 1991 to address the mental, social, emotional and physical health needs of gay men and lesbians in Saskatchewan. Despite rapid growth and a change of title, the organization has always been a staple in our community, ensuring the well-being, research, and advocacy for the LGBTQ2+ community. From a youth engagement perspective, their programming has led the way in engaging and providing services specific to the unique needs of LGBTQ2+ children and youth.

We know that the LGBTQ2+ youth have significant rates of mental health issues stemming from bullying, lack of support and resources, and feeling disconnected from the community. The programming at OUT Saskatoon creates an environment of belonging and inclusivity. This is an extremely important protective factor for the well-being of LGBTQ2+ children and youth.

OUT Saskatoon has a full-time youth education coordinator that organizes and facilitates programming for LGBTQ2+ children and youth. Programming includes Rainbow Pyy, a youth group for children aged 10-14 and Rainbow Coffee, a youth group for those 15-19 years of age. The groups have an educational component where children and youth are provided material from staff and community members, as well as a social component that provides socialization in a safe atmosphere.

“ Rainbow Coffee gives resources for youth in bad home situations, education that’s specific to queer youth, and is very fabulous! ”

– Youth quote

Youth are also provided access to a mental health professional for counselling, a psychiatrist, a medical doctor and a sexual health clinic. These services are offered at specific times for children and youth only, so they can access them in a safe environment and be served by practitioners that are aware of their unique struggles and issues, providing emotional, psychological and medical interventions in a supportive environment.

As part of the journey for inclusiveness, OUT Saskatoon partners with fYrefly to educate the community with in-school presentations, presentations to health professionals, community organizations, unions, corporations, municipal and government employees, police and RCMP. Each presentation helps to break down barriers, disseminate stigmas and create inclusiveness for LGBTQ2+ children and youth.

Camp fYrefly is a summer camp for LGBTQ2+ children and youth that aims to create a socially just and inclusive community, build resiliency and youth leadership, empower youth to address bullying, harassment, hate crimes and knowing their rights, and learning through art, music, writing and performing arts. A variety of workshops, activities and guest speakers/artists contribute to a unique experience that leaves participants with a stronger sense of self and confidence to move forward in their journey.

Pride Home is a group home specifically for LGBTQ2+ youth where they can live healthy lives, free of hate, free of transphobia, and free to be whomever they want to be. There was a need for safe housing for youth in the community as many group homes were either not able, or willing, to provide services to youth based on their identity or youth were not able to live at home due to issues within their families related to their identity.

“ This is my home. I call this place home now. And I’m thankful for that. Now that I live at Pride Home, I feel more comfortable being myself full time. ”

– Youth quote

Pride Home also provides wrap around supports including peer support, healthcare advocacy, meal-planning, employment and school support, programs and activities.

In addition to the child and youth specific resources found at OUT Saskatoon, the organization also hosts a social and support group for parents, family, caregivers, and support persons of LGBTQ2+ children and youth. Providing the adults in their lives with the knowledge and support they require provides the young people with another strong advocate and ally.

DEAF CROWS COLLECTIVE

Winston Knoll Collegiate (and, formerly, Thom Collegiate) of Regina Public Schools operates an artist-in-residency program for youth who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH). Unfortunately, these youth often face social and emotional issues incurred by language deprivation.

Language deprivation is a neurodevelopmental disorder imposed on DHH children and youth due to social and cultural biases against sign language, and an overly optimistic view that technology (hearing aids and cochlear implants) enables full access to spoken language. This is not the case for many DHH children and youth. Most DHH children are introduced to spoken language initially, then receive some form of signing (but not a standard form of language), and then eventually start to learn American Sign Language (ASL) in their teen years - long after the window for optimal language is closed (at age seven).

Language deprivation severely impacts intellectual, academic, social, and emotional development and greatly diminishes opportunities for post secondary education and employment. Deaf Crows Collective aims to circumvent these impacts. The students' participation in the Deaf Crows Collective has increased their language acquisition, social and emotional maturity, and has given back the joy of learning to these young people who languished for many years trying to learn academic content without a language. Even though they will continue to struggle enormously with print English, they are increasingly ready now to take their place in society as fully capable young adults.

Deaf Crows Collective has successfully produced two original theatre plays, Deaf Crows and Apple Time, featuring puppetry, physical theatre and ASL poetry. They have also created a short ASL poetry performance, Nay's Story, and an arts installation, The Deaf Forest. All artistic works produced by the Deaf Crows Collective comment on the Deaf experience and community, and the need for American Sign Language and successful Deaf role models in assisting these DHH youth in obtaining a better future.

In response to the work of Deaf Crows Collective, the arts community has rallied around the Deaf community by commissioning Apple Time, and providing ASL interpreted performances (Globe Theatre, Artesian Theatre). The Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange is organizing an ASL music interpretation workshop (in the fall of 2019) for sign language interpreters with the view to providing ASL interpreting at music festivals and performances. Deaf Crows Collective have also had opportunity to showcase their work in cities throughout Western Canada.

Participation in Deaf Crows Collective has increased the confidence of the DHH students, who are now empowered to speak out on the challenges they face. They have written letters to politicians, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, non-profit agencies and several government officials outlining their struggle to access technology, sign language interpreters, and additional opportunities for schooling and employment.

In partnership with the Canadian Association of the Deaf, the youth organized and participated in an Awareness Rally at the Saskatchewan Legislature to call attention to the importance of sign language, and to advocate for both ASL and Langue des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ) to be recognized as the national sign languages of Canada.

Some of our staff have had the privilege of getting to know the Deaf Crows Collective and attending an Apple Time performance. The perseverance and passion demonstrated by the youth of Deaf Crows Collective is an inspiration. The play was emotional, enlightening and made one very aware of his/her comfort levels. Imagine being the only one in the room who could not freely communicate as everyone else was deaf or hard of hearing, and you did not know sign language.

Providing young people with a creative, inclusive opportunity while empowering them to be strong self-advocates is having a positive impact that is being felt far beyond the city limits of Regina.

ABORIGINAL YOUTH ENTREPRENEUR PROGRAM

The Saskatoon Tribal Council, along with Nutrien, has embraced the Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneur Program (AYEP), a small business program for high school students. Joe Taylor, a former small business owner, leads the initiative and, along with mentors in each location, facilitates 'business clubs' to students from seven First Nations: Mistawasis, Muskoday, Muskeg, One Arrow, Kinistin, Yellow Quill, and Whitecap.

The criteria to be in the business club is simple - students must have good attendance and a positive attitude. Students take a "learn through doing" approach, which involves taking an idea from conception to something real, in demand, and marketable. They must ensure the project is sustainable, viable, can be done themselves, in their community, and hopefully it will earn them a profit.

A business idea that two Muskoday First Nation students initiated is selling change purses with a goal to raise enough capital to develop a drawstring bag. The young ladies named their business Redwaters Bagging. Less than one year later, the girls achieved their goal! They now sell drawstring bags to raise awareness about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The bags have a graphic of three faceless women with the caption "No More Stolen Sisters." When meeting the teens, they appeared shy and quiet; but once they were asked about their business, they became animated and full of discussion.



Many of the other students in the program have experienced this same growth. With Joe's encouragement and gentle challenging to step out of their comfort zones, the young people have moved from being reserved and soft spoken to confident and using their voice. AYEPP has given students the motivation to try opportunities they might not have otherwise considered. Some of the students decided to run in the election to be a Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Youth Representative. Within this, the students got the important experience of identifying some leadership goals, planning a campaign, speaking to the constituents, preparing a speech, and participating in an electoral system.

Our staff first heard of AYEPP from one young man we met at the FSIN Youth Legislative Assembly. He captivated us with his product – the Residential Rooftop Sewer Vent Extension Kit – however, it was his enthusiasm and the confidence he displayed while networking with complete strangers that was most impressive. Months later, our office has established a relationship with Joe and have had the pleasure of engaging with several more of these amazing young people.



It is inspiring to see how their ideas and efforts are paying dividends and giving back to their communities. The students donate a portion of their proceeds to various causes – Redwaters Bagging donates to a women's shelter in Prince Albert; Muskoday students donate to the Elders Lodge in their community; and all business clubs donated to the Sanctum Survivor Care Home.

The AYEPP students hosted a workshop entitled, "Entrepreneurism as a Means to Reconciliation" at a national conference this past year. We are honoured to have some of the AYEPP youth playing



Kinistin's Tasty Towne Catering and Yellow Quill's Wolves Catering businesses have catered to events in their communities, in addition to several functions within Saskatoon's corporate community. Students have had the chance to cook with and learn from highly acclaimed chefs and catering teams.

key roles at our office's upcoming 'Now in My Day – Our Issues, Our Voice, Our Time' conference.

In May 2018 Joe and the young entrepreneurs attended the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly to be recognized for their work in the business clubs. The students have participated in various competitions, winning numerous awards and having the opportunity to meet with influential entrepreneurs and professionals. In early 2019, some of the AYEY youth appeared before the Dragon's Den producers to showcase their art and business plan and are waiting to hear if they will be accepted to the show. Besides opening doors for them now and into their futures, this has given the young people a chance to succeed and a sense of hope and pride are being instilled.

When asked what drew the youth to the first meeting, all responded that they went because free pizza was being offered. From a simple invitation on a poster, to attending an afterschool meeting, the lives of many students have been dramatically impacted through AYEY, along with those whom are benefitting from their products and generosity.



3R (Re-Cycle, Re- Use, Re-Invent) Innovative Imaging involves students from most of the participating communities. The students have designed a way to utilize used cabinet doors, that would be destined for the landfill, and turn them into beautiful pieces of First Nations art.



The students from One Arrow First Nation took a simple community garden and evolved it into a project that includes hydroponics and a fruit tree orchard. They hope to further expand to include greenhouses and bee keeping operations. This project will eventually engage the entire school and community, and lead towards food security and self-sufficiency.



YOUTH SPEAK OUT

Youth Speak Out (YSO) provides an opportunity for young people to get involved in dialog related to how the child welfare system has impacted them. The goal is to bring youth voice to conversations around what is working and what is not working within that system, and advocating for change to have better outcomes for children and youth.

The Adoption Support Centre of Saskatchewan (ASCS), in partnership with Adoption Council of Canada (ACC), first brought the program to Saskatchewan in September 2017. The Saskatchewan Youth Speak Out team is part of a national program initiated by ACC. YSO is a program for youth (ages 14-26) in care, adopted from care, and aged out of care, who reside in and around Saskatoon.

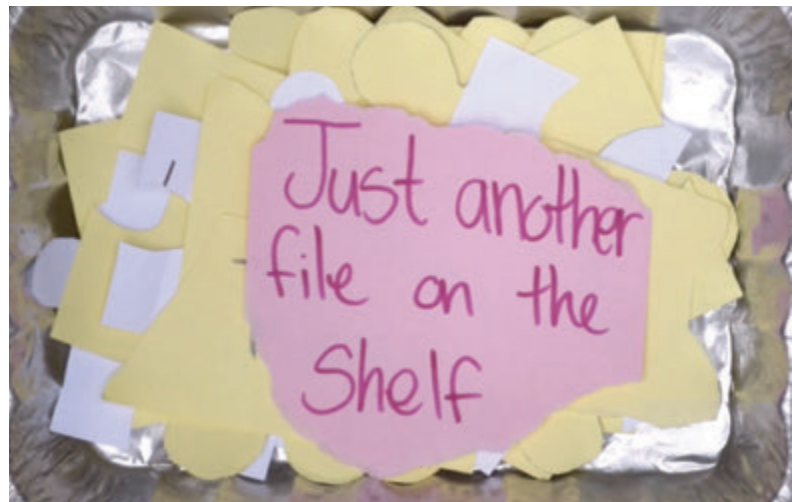
YSO encourages youth to identify and articulate their lived experiences in foster care, adoption, guardianship, kinship care and reunification by providing them with opportunities to share their stories through digital storytelling and panel presentations with a moderator.

“ The opportunity to share my thoughts and opinions on certain topics in front of professionals. It gives me a voice and others a voice I've always strived for. ”

- YSO Panel Member

YSO provides youth with training and support to become mentors, leaders, and advocates for all children and youth in care. Participants are also provided with a youth network and the opportunity to connect with other youth and mentors with similar experiences of foster care and adoption.

YSO teaches youth about civic engagement and leadership skills. During the initial training youth are guided in developing skills in creating short films, public speaking and panel presentations (including strategic sharing). The youth continue to develop their skills through speaking engagement opportunities.



Over the last 18 months, in addition to our office, the YSO team has presented to a number of government and non-government groups including: a variety of programs within the Ministry of Social Services (such as directors and managers, adoption unit, legal team, and Ministry case workers), Adoption Support Centre of Saskatchewan staff and board members, Adoption Council of Canada staff, Minister of Social Services Paul Merriman, Saskatoon police and Elders, Court of Queen's Bench family Judges from Saskatoon and Regina, and a variety of professionals at the Saskatchewan Association of Police Affiliated Victim Services Conference.



“ ... my fave part is going to places to speak and the satisfaction afterwards and the more I become comfortable with my story every time I speak, and I feel more at peace. ”

- YSO Panel Member

ENDING INEQUITY: Working Together for Better Outcomes

The fundamental goal of our office is to be part of the solution that results in positive change in the quality of life for First Nations and Métis children and youth. Strengthening relationships and working together with First Nations and Métis partners is one of the Advocate's key priorities. Over the last year, we have maintained relationships with communities previously visited and our staff have made new connections in several more First Nations communities. In 2018 our office engaged with representatives from 31 First Nations communities.

These connections have taken our staff throughout the province; yet the themes we see regarding barriers faced by Indigenous communities remain consistent. While there have been small steps towards progress in achieving better outcomes, sadly, First Nations and Métis children and youth continue to face systemic violations of their rights in many areas, including health, education, child welfare and justice.

For instance, in Canada today, thousands of Indigenous children, youth and their families are involved in the child welfare system. Nationally, 50 percent of children in care are Indigenous, and Saskatchewan exceeds the national average significantly with roughly 80 percent of Indigenous children and youth in care.⁵ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls for commitments from every level of government to reduce the numbers of Indigenous children in care and create effective services to maintain children within their family units.⁶ In the wake of this report, as well as the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling that Canada's funding practices are discriminatory to Indigenous children, there is the growing discontent with the status quo by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, leaders and advocates. The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates issued a statement in January 2018 which stated "...that Indigenous peoples have the inherent right to self-determination, including the right to care for their children."




UNCRC
ARTICLE 2:
NON-DISCRIMINATION

To this point, the Advocate has been vocal about the necessity of transformation of the child welfare system to give First Nations full authority over child welfare matters pertaining to First Nations children and youth. Our office will continue to support First Nations in their journey to bring this goal to fruition.

With respect to long-standing discrepancies regarding service provision to First Nations children and youth, we have been encouraged by improvements in public awareness, and the application of Jordan's Principle. This progress is helping to ensure First Nations children have access to the services they need. We continue to assist in creating awareness of Jordan's Principle by providing information and referring communities and families to regional Jordan's Principle representatives when we become aware of children and youth with unmet needs.

In our *Shhh...LISTEN!! We Have Something to Say! Youth Voices from the North* report, we called on the provincial government to formally adopt Jordan's Principle and work in partnership with Indigenous governments, leaders, and communities to leverage resources available under this program. While there has not been any official recognition of our Call to Action, we will continue to challenge all governments to take ownership over ensuring a high standard of care for First Nations children and youth. To fully achieve equal opportunity for these young people, commitments from all levels of government is required.



UNCRC
ARTICLE 6:
GOVERNMENTS
SUPPORT CHILDREN
TO SURVIVE AND
DEVELOP TO
THEIR FULL
POTENTIAL

Some of the key messages that the YSO youth share are:

- Permanency of some form is crucial for the safety, security, and stability that children and youth require to navigate the world successfully.
- Children and youth require better relationships and communication from the professionals working with them to feel they have a voice in decisions being made around their care.
- Positive relationships and connections are a vital piece of young people's sense of security and well-being.
- Siblings need to stay together when they are under the care of a child welfare agency.
- Ensuring youth have the opportunity to explore and connect with their desired culture.

“ I found the presentation from YSO very meaningful to get a clear picture and perspective to ensure children's needs are being met and their voices are heard. ”

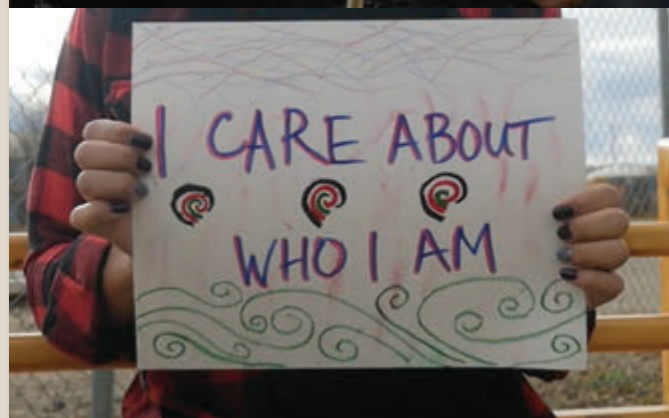
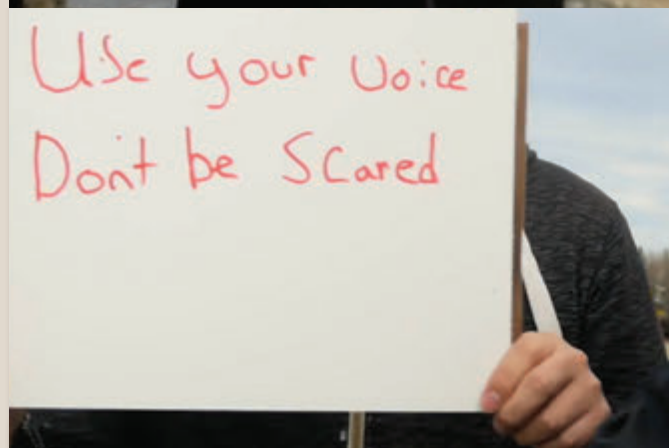
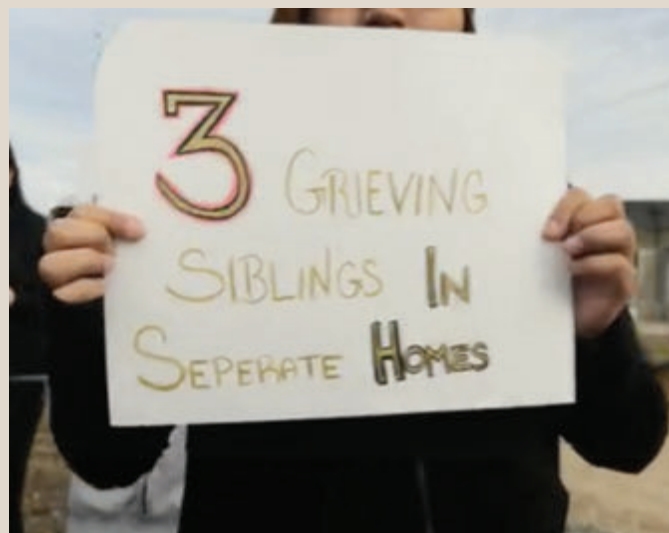
- Audience Participant Member

The youth involved with YSO demonstrate tremendous resilience and courage when sharing their personal stories. This lived experience is crucial to informing policies and processes.

YSO is another great example of youth influencing others and of being change-makers!

Video created by YSO:
vimeo.com/243372767

Saskatoon Youth Speak Out Team choose six words that hold significance to them in order to tell a story about permanency, adoption and/or foster care.



“ The panel presentation was powerful. The youths' voices are powerful. ”

- Audience Participant Member

In 2018 we pushed the boundaries of our jurisdiction by advocating directly to the Government of Canada as it has responsibility for First Nations communities. The Advocate sent written correspondence to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs outlining our concerns regarding the disparity of funding for on-reserve education. The Advocate also sent written correspondence to this same Minister, along with the Minister of Indigenous Services, to provide a summary of the findings of our *Shhh...LISTEN!! We Have Something to Say! Youth Voices from the North* report. In both cases, we received minimal response to our requests for further discussion. Unfortunately, Canada does not have a National Children's Commissioner with jurisdiction over federally-regulated services to children and youth. Our office has long advocated for the creation of such a body. In its absence, we will utilize our means to hold the federal government accountable to addressing all forms of discrimination and oppression faced by First Nations and Métis children and youth in Saskatchewan.

Our office will also continue to engage with our provincial First Nations and Métis governments and communities to identify issues and determine where our advocacy efforts may be of assistance. In 2018 our office had a 16% increase in individual advocacy files with First Nations communities and agencies.

Our office, along with First Nations and Métis stakeholders and families, remain focused on achieving better outcomes for our First Nations and Métis children and youth. Together, we will obtain equality.



⁵ Saskatchewan Hansards, December 5, 2017

⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). (2015). Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Winnipeg, MB: Author.

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS INQUIRY

In 2018 the Advocate had the opportunity to represent Indigenous children and youth from Saskatchewan on a national scale when he was invited to appear before the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as both a party with standing and an expert witness on the Human Rights Framework. Considering that Saskatchewan has the second highest population of Indigenous people among the provinces, 42.5% of this population is 19 years old or under,⁷ and half of these youth are female, it was especially important that the voice of Indigenous girls and LGBTQ2S+ youth in our province be heard at this forum.

The Advocate's recommendations to the Inquiry were formed as a result of the work our office does within Indigenous communities and the issues that are brought to our attention through these collaborations. The recommendations made by our office include:

- prioritizing the eradication of Indigenous child poverty within the recently released federal Poverty Reduction Strategy,
- ensuring the education system is appropriate for all children and youth and specifically meets the unique needs of Indigenous children and youth,
- including the voices of Indigenous youth in decisions and matters that affect them,
- providing adequate training to law enforcement officials and prosecutors with the aim of protecting all child victims of trafficking and improving enforcement of current legislation,
- creating a national initiative to measure and report on child welfare, education and health outcomes for Indigenous children and youth,
- establishing effective budgetary frameworks among all levels of government that incorporate the needs of children – particularly vulnerable groups such as Indigenous children,
- requiring all levels of government to conduct a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) when making changes to policy, practice or legislation to systematically consider how children's rights and interests – with specific attention on those of Indigenous children – who are, or will be, affected by their decisions and actions,
- having Canada take immediate steps to sign and ratify the 3rd Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, and,
- the creation of an independent National Children's Commissioner with authority to make recommendations to government regarding federally-regulated services to children and youth.



We eagerly anticipate the final recommendations made by the Commissioners of the Inquiry and urge all levels of leadership and government to take the required action to protect our Indigenous youth from further harm and violations of their rights.

www.mmiwg-ffada.ca

⁷ Statistics Canada, "Data tables, 2016 Census" - 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016154
Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/>

OPIKINAWASOWIN

Our staff were invited to meet with members of the Ministry of Social Services (MSS) Elders Council to learn more about Opikinawasowin. The Opikinawasowin hearing process was initiated in 2003 to address the over-representation of First Nations and Métis families in child welfare, as well as the growing pressure on the judiciary to deal more promptly with applications under *The Child and Family Services Act*.

Opikinawasowin is a Cree word which means *"holding children in high esteem."*

Opikinawasowin is a traditional method of dispute resolution that can be considered in child protection legal proceedings and is akin to other forms of resolution, such as mediation or family group conferencing. Opikinawasowin is also a framework for child rearing and *"...teaching parental responsibility for nurturing, protecting and providing for the needs of the children entrusted to First Nations by the Creator."*



Photo courtesy of Leah Dorion

The parents and the MSS Director must agree to resolve their dispute in a forum that is culturally-based. Once an interim order (under Section 35 of *The Child and Family Services Act*) is granted, court is adjourned for approximately six weeks to accommodate the Opikinawasowin.

In preparation for the Opikinawasowin, the Elders review confidential information provided by the Ministry of Social Services. This review facilitates the opportunity to delve deeper into the issues during the actual meeting. Opikinawasowin focuses on resolving issues and what the parents need to do to get their children back into their care.

The process brings together family and community caregivers for children, identifies family supports and works to reduce the need for children to remain in foster care. Mental health therapists and counsellors are enlisted to work with the parents and to teach them alternative ways of coping and dealing with traumatic experiences. The process keeps the children at the center of all planning and ensures that all of those who have an interest can participate fully in potential resolutions. The children are welcome to voice their opinions on what is needed to make their situation better.

All participants appear before the Elders who are selected based on the background of the family and the issues identified. The Council of Elders are representative of Cree, Dené, Nakaway, Dakota, Saulteaux, Métis and other cultures.

At the conclusion of the Opikinawasowin, a written report with recommendations is given to MSS, legal counsel for the parents, and the Judge. Since the Opikinawasowin started in 2003, none of the recommendations have been turned down by the court.

Opikinawasowin provides an important opportunity for First Nations and Métis people to help shape the destinies of their families. It builds a bridge between child protection concerns and traditional practices of harmony, wellness and safety, benefiting both the children and the parents.

ATAMISKĀKĒWAK NATIONAL GATHERING

The week of April 23 to 28, 2018 was significant for Treaty 4 and the City of Moose Jaw, as people from across the country and other parts of the world, travelled to the city for the first-ever Atamiskākēwak National Gathering.

Atamiskākēwak, which means '*shaking hands in greeting with each other*', was created to bridge the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the spirit of reconciliation. Converging Pathways and Indigenous Pathways (two private companies that foster collaboration and engagement to promote effectively working alongside Indigenous people and communities) partnered on a shared initiative with the City of Moose Jaw to host Atamiskākēwak.

The week-long gathering focused on several different topics, including the child welfare system, education, language, culture, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The Advocate was invited to speak on the first day of the gathering, in which a full-day session on the child welfare system was held.

Other invited guests included the Chief of Cowessess First Nation, Cadmus Delorme, representatives from the Child Welfare League of Canada, and a youth session which included lived experience from three young people in foster care. The sessions were a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, specific to child welfare (Calls to Action 1-5).

The gathering also included a sharing circle with Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, interactive tipi tours, Kairos Blanket Exercise and Treaty Walks facilitated by Oski-pimohtahtamwak Otayisīniwaw – a leadership team at Bert Fox Community High school (featured in our 2017 Annual Report).

Atamiskākēwak is an excellent example of a community taking action and coming together for the betterment of all their residents.

www.nationalgathering.ca



THE SECRET PATH

by Gord Downie & Jeff Lemire

The story of Chanie Wenjack is a devastating reminder of the Indian Residential School System that many Canadians are only now, in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action, becoming aware.

Chanie, a young boy forced to live at the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, escaped on October 22, 1966. The desire to be with his loved ones was strong but Chanie was 400 miles from his community and, like too many other children, he never made it home. Chanie's story provided the inspiration for a Canadian music icon and a renowned artist to create the Secret Path,⁸ with the hope to educate our country and continue to pave the way for reconciliation.

Prior to commencing his tenure as the Advocate, Corey O'Soup was honoured to represent Saskatchewan's perspective in the creation of the Secret Path. Mr. O'Soup was challenged to take Chanie's story and share the tragic fate that far too many Indigenous children met during the period of Residential Schools.

The 2015 TRC Calls to Action serve as a conduit for sharing stories. Call 57 particularly speaks to educating government employees on the history of Aboriginal peoples and the legacy of residential schools. Using this as his impetus, along with the challenge originally received, the Advocate has taken every opportunity he can to educate others. The staff at our office have all watched documentaries, participated in talking circles, and received a copy of the Secret Path, and continually receive training and invite guest speakers to provide education on the history of colonialism in Canada.

In October of 2018, the Advocate was provided the opportunity to present at the Ministry of Social Services Management Forum on Truth and Reconciliation. In his presentation, he introduced over 400 MSS leaders to the Secret Path and challenged them to share Chanie's story. For some, this was their first time hearing such a personalized experience of residential school. Their reactions were overwhelming, and several copies of the Secret Path are now in their hands to pass along in the spirit of reconciliation.

⁸ Downie, G. and Lemire, J. (2016). Secret Path. Toronto, ON: Simon & Schuster Canada. CBC Arts. (2016). Gord Downie's The Secret Path. Toronto, ON: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGd764YU9yc>



Proceeds from the sale of Secret Path go to **The Gord Downie Secret Path Fund for Truth and Reconciliation** via The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at The University of Manitoba.

www.secretpath.ca
www.nctr.ca/map.php
www.trc.ca



EDUCATION: The Foundation of the Future

The Advocate strongly believes education is the key to changing the future for children, youth, and their families. Education comes in many forms, from teaching young children basic skills, to providing adults with intervention and prevention knowledge and programming. Education that benefits young people is not only that which is provided to them, but also to their families. Yet, we continue to fall short in this regard.

There are many children and youth that do not attend school on a regular basis. Once in school, finding creative ways to keep students engaged and inspired to learn is vital to their success. Equally important is fostering an environment that is sympathetic to the challenges children and youth may be experiencing. Providing the resources and supports to assist students reduces stigma and encourages them to seek help. Having healthier, educated young people will influence greater achievement in all areas of life.

Since taking office in the fall of 2016, the Advocate has been vocal about inequitable graduation rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. In comparison to many other countries, Canada's educational system has a lot to be proud of in terms of achievement and equity (students' ability to attain basic skills to participate in society, regardless of personal circumstances).⁹ In Saskatchewan, our education system boasts high equity rates however it is significantly less favourable on student achievement, meaning that the Government of Saskatchewan has set a target graduation rate of 85%, yet in the 2017-18 school year the Indigenous student graduation rate was 44.5%¹⁰ (a modest increase from the previous school year).

As University of Saskatchewan economist Eric Howe has noted, improving the levels of education and employment for First Nations and Métis people could, over the longer term, add \$90 billion to the provincial economy¹¹. This means that money saved in areas like social services, justice and health, could then be reinvested in innovative programs and services to help all children get a good start in life.

Beyond any economic benefits, this inequality is simply unacceptable given the right to education for all children and youth, as guaranteed in the UNCRC.

In 2018 our staff visited 53 provincial schools and met with officials in eight school divisions. We also visited seven schools on-reserve and established strong relationships with the Treaty 4 Education Alliance and the Education Director and Superintendent of Lac La Ronge First Nation. The Advocate has presented at several education forums, including the Saskatoon Teachers Association convention, the Regina Teachers convention, Ministry of Education's Planning Summit, National Congress on Rural Education, Think Indigenous conference, and to the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. Through this engagement, we had the opportunity to teach hundreds of children and youth (in addition to their adult supports) about their rights while increasing awareness of our office. This has resulted in an over 80% increase in individual advocacy files involving the education systems in our province.

We know that learning is a life-long journey that extends far beyond the walls of schools and education facilities. Infants, toddlers and pre-school aged children need an early years' program to ensure they get a good start in life and guarantee they are school ready. Intervention and prevention programs provide adults with the education and supports they need to be strong, healthy caregivers to their children. Keeping families together by encouraging learning from an early age, and supporting it into adulthood, not only benefits the family but the entire community.



⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/education-at-a-glance-2016-indicators.htm> (retrieved March 2019)

¹⁰ <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2017/september/22/prov-graduation-rate> (retrieved March 2019)

¹¹ <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/education-at-a-glance-2016-indicators.htm> (retrieved March 2019)

MINDUP

Year after year, Connaught Elementary School staff in North Battleford have observed an increasing level of anxiety and other mental health related issues in their pre-kindergarten to grade six student population.

With the assistance of a group of fourth-year nursing students, during a community placement at the School, the 'MindUP' program¹² was identified as a possible way to help. The nursing students brought the idea forward to the School administrators, and with financial support through the Community Foundation, Connaught Elementary became Saskatchewan's first licensed MindUP school.

With its grounding in neuroscience, MindUP enables teachers to incorporate mindfulness and other scientifically proven techniques into the classroom. The MindUP program is designed to "give children the knowledge and tools they need to manage stress, regulate emotions and face the challenges of the 21st century with resilience." According to the Vice Principal, after initiating the program with their students in the spring of 2018, she and other teachers have noticed a calming effect throughout the school population.

This may be attributed to the regular use of mindful breathing techniques used in the classroom, particularly after recess and other times when students must transition or settle into more focused academic activities. These MindUP techniques have also had an influence on their language in and outside of the classroom.

Beyond the general student population, where general 'Tier 1' MindUP approaches are used, students who are experiencing more stressful circumstances can be supported at a 'Tier 2 level' to provide a more personalized MindUP program experience.

One study conducted in 2014 into the efficacy of MindUP appears to mirror the anecdotal observations by Connaught Elementary School staff in that it can improve cognitive control skills and social-emotional competence and wellbeing. Although still in early days, the School's Vice Principal expressed that this is a simple, user friendly program and they are proud to have found a potentially sustainable method of helping students cope with stress, anxiety and mental health related issues.

mindup.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Schonert-Reichl-et-al.-MindUp-RCT-DP-2015.pdf

¹² Shonert-Reichal, K. et al (2015). "Enhancing Cognitive and Social-Emotional Development Through a Simple-to-Administer Mindfulness-Based School Program for Elementary School Children: A Randomized Controlled Trial. Published by the American Psychological Association.

MOBILE SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT CLINIC

Children North Early Childhood Intervention Program (Children North) is a non-profit corporation based in La Ronge. Children North provides home based interventions to 150 families both on and off-reserve in northern Saskatchewan. Children North has been forced to find creative solutions to deal with the barriers that families face in accessing resources for their children. Families experience lengthy waitlists for assessments and services, are often required to travel several hours to larger cities to receive the services, and some children had missed multiple appointments. To address these issues, Children North developed a partnership and created the Mobile Screening and Assessment Clinic. Three times a year Children North hosts the week-long clinic for children who have development delays due to alcohol exposure or who have stress related exposure.

A team of pediatric specialists from the south, mainly Saskatoon, dedicate their time to the Clinic, which is funded in a combination of ways. The College of Teratology funds the physiotherapist, speech pathologist, and Dr. Pat Blakely, Pediatrician. Lac La Ronge First Nation covers the cost of hotels and food. Children North funds the Social Worker and the Educational Psychologist. Prince Albert Grand Council provides the Occupational Therapist. To cover some of the Clinic's miscellaneous costs, Children North staff volunteer their time fundraising through hot dog sales (a partnership with the Giant Tiger store).

Families spend a full day at the Clinic so the children can meet with each specialist for assessment. The specialists and the Children North staff then come together to review the assessments and create developmental plans for each child. Children North supports the plans in the family's home by teaching caregivers about their children's needs and guiding them through exercises and activities that are of benefit to their children. Children North also assists with the coordination of follow-up appointments.

The Clinic provides transportation, childcare services (as many of the families have multiple children), supplies nutritious snacks and lunch, and has a clothing depot of donations that families can access. These additional services reduce hardships for the families and has resulted in a 98% success rate in children attending the Clinic, compared to 42% when families must travel for appointments.

Early assessment, diagnosis and intervention enhances development and results in children being school-ready. The school can then build off the developmental plan completed to help these young people to reach their full potential. Parents and caregivers have overwhelmingly expressed feeling better equipped to meet their children's needs after receiving support from Children North.

The Mobile Screening and Assessment Clinic is another excellent example of a child-centered partnership working to meet the needs of their community.

www.children-north.ecip.ca

RESTORATIVE ACTION PROGRAM

Mount Royal Collegiate had enough of violence, bullying, and crime, and refused to stand by as they witnessed the negative impacts that mental health, substance abuse, suicide, and self-harm was having on their students, school, and community. They knew that the historical, punitive practices of suspending or expelling students was only contributing to the decline and took on the challenge of taking a new approach.

A team of educators, administrators, students and community members designed a Restorative Justice Program. They partnered with the Rotary Club of Saskatoon, Saskatoon Public Schools and the Saskatchewan Community Initiatives Fund and, in 2003, began the Restorative Justice Pilot Program at Mount Royal.

Initially the program's goal was to reduce violence and bullying while developing a positive school culture. This grew into a much broader initiative and soon included conflict prevention and helping disengaged students reconnect with their school and community. The program evolved and, in 2006, became what is now known as the Restorative Action Program (RAP). RAP continues to expand, now including a focus on building leadership skills.

RAP is rooted in a solution focused philosophy that turns challenges into opportunities for growth. Through individual and group work, the program provides support, advocacy, and resources to assist students in overcoming the obstacles that are hindering their success, both at school and in the community.

RAP has seen a marked increase in the number of young people who are self-referring to the program. In the 2017-18 school year, RAP was utilized by 1340 students and RAP facilitators were involved in over 300 activities including presentations and workshops.

Through a connection with the RAP program in two schools, our office has been privileged to present to over 600 young people. Bishop James Mahoney High School hosted a mental health awareness day for their students. We spoke about their rights, our *Shhh...LISTEN!! We Have Something to Say! Youth Voices from the North* report and positive mental health. E.D. Feehan High School provided their students with the opportunity to complete community service work. We were inspired as the students shared about their experience, and then provided them with an empowering message of how each are acting as change-makers in their community.

Today RAP is in nine high schools throughout Saskatoon. It is supported by all five Rotary Clubs and by both school boards, government and community agencies, as well as, businesses and individuals. The goal is to have a RAP Facilitator in every school in Saskatoon.

RAP has become a pillar for students in the Saskatoon area, helping to eliminate and manage many of the factors that impede achievement. Our office looks forward to continued partnership as the program expands.

www.rapsaskatoon.org



PENCILS OF HOPE

As a university student majoring in education, Aysha Yaqoob wanted to do something to help children who came to school without all the required supplies. After learning about the inequity in funding for First Nations children, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action in eliminating the disparity in education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserve compared to non-First Nations children, Aysha knew she could play a role in reconciliation.

Aysha learned that, on average, it costs \$136 per child to purchase yearly school supplies. After a breakfast conversation with her family about her idea, Pencils of Hope, a not for profit program, was launched in 2015, with the goal of helping parents and teachers ensure children have the supplies necessary to support their education.

A photographer by hobby, Aysha allows clients to set a price for her services. All the money earned is put towards Pencils of Hope. The program has also built partnerships with businesses and local organizations to fundraise throughout the school year. All proceeds are used for donations to schools throughout Saskatchewan who have reached out for support.

Due to the incredible success and increased sponsorship, Pencils of Hope has expanded to include a new program, 'The Student Project', which focuses on meeting the needs of individual students. Their parents or caregivers can apply for specific needs-based assistance.

Pencils of Hope demonstrates how a simple idea can have a huge impact, and how young people are pillars of hope for change!

www.pencilsofhope.ca



RAISING HOPE

Operating in Regina since 2013, Raising Hope is a residential based program which accommodates up to 15 families in their 18 two-bedroom suites. Raising Hope provides a one-stop service to pregnant women or mothers of newborns who have substance use, mental health and past trauma issues. In these circumstances, the risk of their babies being apprehended and entering the child welfare system is high. While fathers and partners do not live at the residence, they are encouraged to participate in the case plan.

Foundational to the philosophy and mandate of the women centred program is to provide harm reduction, trauma informed practice, relationship-based education, and safety and cultural teachings. Raising Hope maintains a focus on health and wellness and offers on-site medical care for the women and their children. The organization's physician provides diagnosis and treatment, and also practices at a clinic in the community where continuity of care can be facilitated when the family is transitioning from the Raising Hope program. Raising Hope also has designated child care space with activity stations created to improve child development and foster interaction between the mothers and their children.

Raising Hope caters their services to women and children who generally lack housing security. Whether couch surfing, staying with friends, or living in unsafe environments due to violence and addictions, these circumstances can

jeopardize the ability of children to feel safe and thrive in their surroundings. While at Raising Hope, mothers learn how to be "good renters" and staff assist them in accessing safe housing as part of the exit strategy from the program. Ensuring physical safety is a key characteristic of providing trauma informed care to clients who likely experienced various forms of violence in their relationships as adults and in childhood. At Raising Hope, exterior doors are locked, and all visitors to the building are closely monitored. A high priority is placed on physical safety to ensure the women and their children are comfortable and can build trust and confidence in the program.

From November 2013 - October 2018, Raising Hope supported 33 babies to leave the hospital in their mother's care. An additional 44 children whom were not in parental care were returned to their mother's care while in the program. Raising Hope is a program that helps support and maintain the mother-child bond and diverts children away from apprehension and entry into the child welfare system. Keeping children with their mothers is in their best interest and enhances their chances of survival and development during the most vulnerable period in their life.



WORKING TOWARD SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS

Investing significant time and resources into face to face engagement with people in their communities allows us to develop authentic relationships and meaningful partnerships. This has a direct correlation to an increase in people reaching out to our office for support. In 2018 our office managed over 2,200 files, including investigations, public education, recommendation, research, and systemic and individual advocacy cases. Specific to advocacy, we handled just under 1,600 files and supported children, youth, families, community members and professionals to navigate public systems.

The knowledge we gain from those with lived experience is invaluable. Besides providing an account of what people experience, it provides us a window into the functioning of our public service systems. It allows us to address gaps and barriers to ensure children and youth receive the services to which they are entitled. Monitoring the causes and contributing factors leading to deaths and critical injuries¹³ of young people involved with public systems is also an important process. It protects children and youth and is part of ensuring children are at the centre and their best interests and rights are upheld. All of this work helps the Advocate determine where systemic advocacy efforts will be best placed in order to ensure adequate and appropriate public service provision.

For instance, in 2017, we reported a significant increase in infant deaths where sleep-associated risk factors were identified by the Office of the Chief Coroner as being present where the cause of death was otherwise classified as 'undetermined'. We have since re-opened our systemic file on the issue of safe sleeping and requested information from the Office of the Chief Coroner on the number of *all* deaths in the province where sleep associated risk factors were present from 2015 to 2017.



We found that there were 34 cases of infant death in Saskatchewan where sleeping practices were identified as a risk factor during this three-year period. While this trend did not continue among the subset of deaths reported to our office in 2018, we wanted to examine whether more could be done given the prevalence of risk across the province. Although the probability is high that the Ministries of Health and/or Social Services have reviewed the risks unsafe sleep environments represent to newborn babies, the decision-making of parents and caregivers indicates that more effort and awareness is needed to prevent such deaths. Accordingly, our staff is devising a strategy to advocate for further public awareness among parents and caregivers.

Another way our office is using the knowledge gained to work more proactively, is by focusing much of our efforts on ensuring children and youth have access to adequate and appropriate mental health services. Incidents of suicide and self-harm remain high. These occurrences violate the rights of our young people at the most fundamental levels – including, but not limited to, the rights to life, the highest possible standard of health (including mental health), and to be safe from harm. Depending on the unique circumstances of each youth, “access” to adequate and appropriate mental health services may require support from the various systems and service providers involved in their life to identify risk, make necessary referrals and support them with engagement.

In this regard, our work has continued with the Ministry of Corrections and Policing to strengthen protections against the risk of suicide for youth involved with the young offender system. In the three years since this work began, the Ministry has been responsive to discussions on this issue and has made a number of changes to policy and practice. Since we last reported on this file, further improvements have included increased clinical oversight of youth

¹³ At the outset of a discussion on deaths and critical injuries reported to our office, we want to address a common misconception regarding the information reflected in our Annual Reports. We have noted that these statistics are often misconstrued as reflecting only incidents involving children and youth in the care of the Minister of Social Services. We want the public to understand that these numbers encompass children and youth who are receiving a wide variety of services from the Ministry of Social Services, First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies and the Ministry of Corrections and Policing. Although we have taken care to describe this context within the text of previous reports, our charts have been formatted differently in this year's Annual Report to better reflect these circumstances.



who are identified to be at risk of suicide, increased supervisory follow-up on recommendations arising from clinical oversight or from internal reviews of critical injuries or deaths, standardized methods for requesting health information and better communication of risk when a young person is released from custody. In 2018, we also initiated discussions with the Ministry of Social Services in regard to how their child protection policies and practices could be strengthened to better protect the young people they serve from risk of suicide. We look forward to further consultation with both Ministries on their response to our observations and suggestions.

All our work comes together to influence systemic change, with the ultimate goal of achieving better outcomes for our province's young people. This not only includes positive mental health, but also inclusivity, equality for those of First Nations and Métis ancestry, higher graduation rates, and a reduction in the number of children in out-of-home care. We will continue to challenge others to transform public service systems and their communities by developing partnerships and implementing innovative actions to benefit generations to come.



WHEN EVERY SECOND MATTERS: A Special Child Death Investigation

In 2018 the Advocate released an investigative report into the tragic death of Angel, a five-year-old boy who drowned in a nearby pond during recess on his first full day of kindergarten in September 2017. This is the first time the Saskatchewan Advocate has conducted an investigation of a child death in a school, and to our knowledge, is the first investigation of this nature amongst all Advocate Offices across the country.

Before attending the Saskatoon school, his parents and staff from his former school provided information about Angel's special needs and his predisposition to run to water and roads without regard for his own safety. Our investigation found that staff at the Saskatoon School created a thorough recess safety plan for Angel, which included: Angel wearing a safety vest, informing all staff to watch out for him at recess, and having his Educational Assistant (EA) continuously hold his hand. Although the EA was told to constantly hold Angel's hand, she was not well informed about his special needs nor about the full safety plan. At recess, Angel was not wearing a safety vest and staff were not advised to watch out for him as planned. Then when Angel managed to pull away and run from his EA, he was unnecessarily vulnerable as not all aspects of the safety plan were in place.

As a result of this investigation, the Advocate made 11 recommendations including the creation of or improvements to policies, information sharing, training and supervision relating to children with special needs. The Advocate also recommended that the Ministry of Education review and ensure consistent policy and practices for students with special needs across the province, and to identify and create plans where external safety hazards exist near schools.

The Saskatoon School, the School Division, and the Ministry of Education have agreed to all 11 of the Advocate's recommendations, and we are currently monitoring their progress.



73 COMMUNITIES
visited across the province.

28
FIRST
NATIONS

Beardy's & Okemasis First Nation
Big River First Nation
Black Lake First Nation
Canoe Lake First Nation
Clearwater River Dene First Nation
Cote First Nation
Cowessess First Nation
Deschambault Lake First Nation
English River First Nation
Flying Dust First Nation
George Gordon First Nation
Lac La Ronge First Nation
Little Pine First Nation
Moosomin First Nation
Mosquito First Nation
Muskowekwan First Nation
One Arrow First Nation
Onion Lake Cree Nation
Pelican Lake First Nation
Poundmaker Cree Nation
Red Pheasant First Nation
Saulteaux First Nation
Stanley Mission First Nation
Star Blanket Cree Nation
Sturgeon Lake First Nation
Sweetgrass First Nation
Whitecap Dakota First Nation
Witchekan Lake First Nation



45
TOWNS &
CITIES

Air Ronge
Big River
Buffalo Narrows
Cupar
Cut Knife
Debden
Duck Lake
Estevan
Fort Qu'Appelle
Glaslyn
Grenfell
Jan's Bay
Kelliher
La Loche
La Ronge
Lipton
Lloydminster
Maidstone
Manor
Marshall
Martensville
Maymont
Meadow Lake
Melfort
Melville
Moose Jaw
Nipawin
Norquay
North Battleford
Paradise Hill
Pilot Butte
Prince Albert
Punnichy
Qu'Appelle
Regina
Rosetown
Sandy Bay
Saskatoon
Spiritwood
Springside
St. Louis
Swift Current
Warman
Weyburn
Yorkton



Big River High School
Buffalo Narrows – Twin Lakes Community School
Cupar School
Cut Knife High School
Debden School
Duck Lake – Stobart Community School
Fort Qu'Appelle
 Bert Fox Community High School
 Fort Qu'Appelle Elementary Community School
Glaslyn Central School
Grenfell Elementary School
Kelliher School
La Ronge – Churchill Community High School
Lipton School
Maidstone High School
Marshall School
Martensville High School
Maymont Central School
Meadow Lake
 Carpenter High School
 Jonas Samson Junior High School
 Jubilee Elementary School
Melville – St. Henry's Junior School
Moose Jaw – Westmount School
North Battleford- Connaught Elementary
Paradise Hill School
Prince Albert - Wesmore Community High School
Qu'Appelle – James Hamblin School
Regina
 Albert School
 Balfour Collegiate
 Cornwall Alternative School
 F.W Johnson Collegiate
 George Lee School
 Scott Collegiate
 St. Luke School
 Thom Collegiate
 Winston Knoll Collegiate
Sandy Bay – Hector Thiboutot Community School
Saskatoon
 Aden Bowman Collegiate
 Bishop Klein School
 Bishop James Mahoney High School
 Bishop Murray High School
 Caswell Community School
 E.D Feehan Catholic School
 Oskayak School
 Pleasant Hill Community School
 Silverwood Heights School
 Walter Murray Collegiate
 Westmount Community School
Springside School
St. Louis School
Swift Current - Maverick School
Yorkton
 Dr. Brass Elementary
 Dreambuilders Learning Centre
 Sacred Heart High School

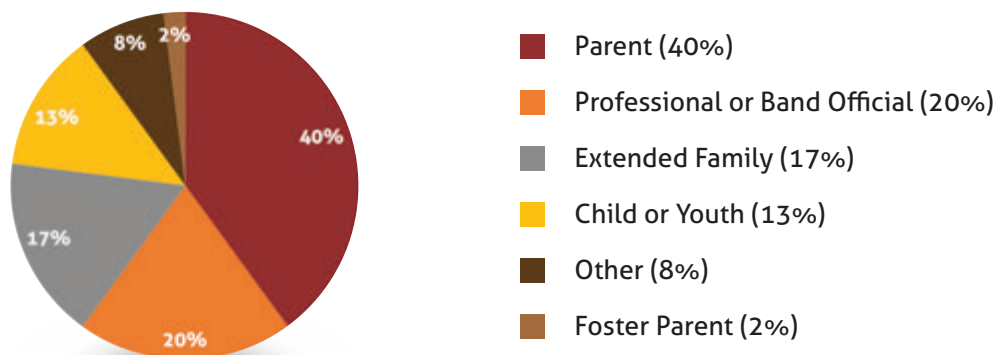
60 SCHOOLS
visited across the province.



Air Ronge
 Bell's Point Elementary School
 Senator Myles Venne School
Beardy's & Okemasis First Nation - Constable Robin Cameron Education Complex
Big River First Nation - Mistahi Sipiy Elementary School
Canoe Lake Miksiw School
Clearwater River Dene Nation School
Cowessess First Nation - Community Education Centre

INTAKE AND COMMON ISSUES DATA

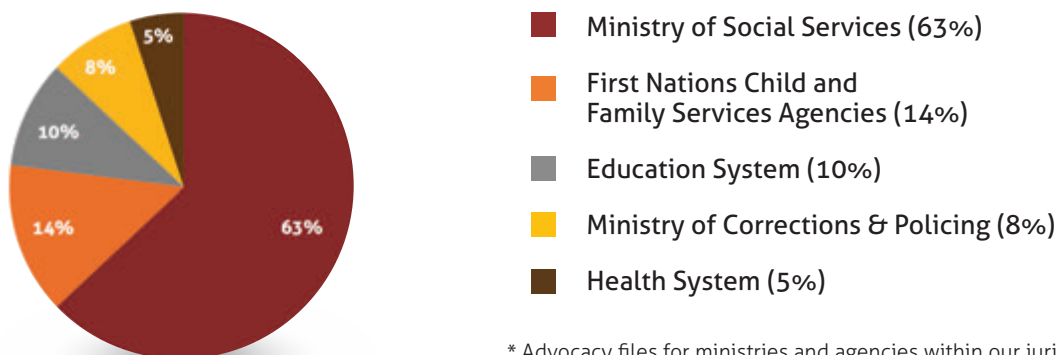
WHO CONTACTED THE ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN 2018*



* Advocacy files only

Parent includes parents, stepparents, non-custodial parents, legal guardians, caregivers, alternate caregivers, and persons of sufficient interest. Other includes interested third parties such as babysitters, neighbors, or anonymous callers.

MINISTRIES OR AGENCIES THE ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH RECEIVED CALLS ABOUT IN 2018*



* Advocacy files for ministries and agencies within our jurisdiction

MOST COMMON ISSUES FOR THE ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN 2018



General Inquiries represents issues that require a referral to another resource or agency. Custody and Access Issues are beyond the mandate of our office. They also require referral to other resources or agencies.

CHILD DEATH AND CRITICAL INJURY DATA

2018 CHILD DEATHS DATA

Gender	Deaths	Total: 20
Male	12	
Female	8	
Ethnicity	Deaths	Total: 20
First Nations and Métis ¹⁴	16	
Non-First Nations or Métis	4	
Unknown	0	
Age	Deaths	Total: 20
0 to 5	9	
6 to 10	1	
11 to 15	3	
16 to 18	6	
19+	1	
Type of Service at Time of Death ¹⁵		Total: 20
CFS - In Care	3	
CFS - Other	7	
CFS - No Active Services	8	
Corrections - Custody (open and closed)	0	
Corrections- Community	2	
Corrections - No Active Services	0	

2018 CHILD DEATHS DATA - IDENTIFIED CAUSES

Cause	Male	Female	Total: 20
Cause Not Available Yet ¹⁶	5	2	7
Undetermined ¹⁷	0	0	0
Suicide	4	4	8
Medically Fragile ¹⁸	1	0	1
Homicide	0	0	0
Motor Vehicle Accident	0	0	0
Hit By Motor Vehicle	0	0	0
Fire	0	0	0
Illness	1	1	2
Drowning	0	0	0
Drug/Alcohol Toxicity	0	0	0
Other	1 ¹⁹	1 ²⁰	2

¹⁴ This category includes children and youth who are both status and non-status First Nations or Métis people, but who have been identified as Indigenous by either the Ministry involved or by the Coroner.

¹⁵ The ACY is notified of the death of a child or youth who is currently receiving, or has recently received, child and family services (CFS) by the Ministry of Social Services or by a First Nations Child and Family Services agency. These services include out-of-home care, as well as other types of services such as investigations of child abuse or neglect, services provided to support families in their homes, support services to 16 and 17-year-old youth so that they can live independently, etc. Children and youth living in the care of a "person having sufficient interest" pursuant to section 23 of *The Child and Family Services Act* are not considered to be wards of the Minister and are captured under in the category of "other" child and family services. The ACY is also notified of deaths of young people currently receiving, or who have recently received, services from the Ministry of Corrections and Policing. These notifications include youth who are in custody (either sentenced or remanded) or serving a community sentence.

¹⁶ When available, information reported as to the cause of death is determined from the Coroner's Reports, which are pending for several 2018 deaths. In the absence of a Coroner's Report, cause of death may be obtained from information reported by the Ministry involved. The category of "Cause Not Available Yet" is used when the ACY has not received reliable information on the cause of death. This is to be distinguished from the category of "Undetermined", which is used by the Coroner where the cause of death has been reviewed by the Coroner but cannot be determined.

¹⁷ See footnote 16.

¹⁸ The term "medically fragile" is used by the ACY to describe the death of a child or youth that was caused by a condition a child was born with that was likely to lead to their death. This is different than the category of "illness", which refers to a new or unexpected natural disease.

¹⁹ This includes an 18-year-old youth who died of hypothermia after remaining outside at night in inclement weather while intoxicated.

²⁰ This includes an infant who died four minutes after her birth. She was born prematurely. The parent declined an autopsy and the Coroner did not investigate.

2018 CRITICAL INJURIES DATA

Gender	Critical Injuries	Total: 45 ²¹
Male	24	
Female	21	
Ethnicity	Critical Injuries	Total: 45
First Nations and Métis	44	
Non-First Nations or Métis	1	
Unknown	0	
Age	Critical Injuries	Total: 45
0 to 5	14	
6 to 10	2	
11 to 15	9	
16 to 18	13	
19+	7	
Type of Service at Time of Injury ²²		Total: 45 ²³
CFS – In Care	21	
CFS – Other	6	
CFS – No Active Services	3	
Corrections – Custody (open and closed)	5 ²⁴	
Corrections - Community	14 ²⁵	
Corrections – No Active Services	0	

2018 CRITICAL INJURIES DATA - IDENTIFIED CAUSES

Cause	Male	Female	Total: 44
Suicide Attempt	6	6	12
Self Harm	3	0	3 ²⁶
Motor Vehicle Accident	0	0	0
Hit by Motor Vehicle	0	0	0
Drug/Alcohol Toxicity (Accidental)	1	2	3
Stabbing	4	1	5
Shooting	1	0	1
Physical Assault	1	1	2
Sexual Assault	0	2	2
Burn	0	0	0
Fall	0	0	0
Suspected Non-accidental and/or Child Abuse	0	0	0
Other Accident	0	1	1 ²⁷
Illness	5	8	13
Other	3	0	3 ²⁸

²¹ The totals referenced throughout the critical injury charts reflect a total of 45 injuries involving 41 youth. One First Nations male youth experienced three critical injuries related to incidences of self-harm. Additionally, one First Nations male youth, and one First Nations female youth both attempted suicide on two occasions.

²² The ACY is notified of the critical injury of a child or youth who is currently receiving, or has recently received, child and family services (CFS) by the Ministry of Social Services or by a First Nations Child and Family Services agency. These services include out-of-home care, as well as other types of services such as investigations of child abuse or neglect, services provided to support families in their homes, support services to 16 and 17-year-old youth so that they can live independently, etc. Children and youth living in the care of a "person having sufficient interest" pursuant to section 23 of *The Child and Family Services Act* are not considered to be wards of the Minister and are captured under in the category of "other" child and family services. The ACY is also notified of deaths of young people currently receiving, or who have recently received, services from the Ministry of Corrections and Policing. These notifications include youth who are in custody (either sentenced or remanded) or serving a community sentence.

²³ While the total number of injuries reported to the ACY in 2018 was 45, four of the youth involved were receiving services by both the Ministry of Social Services/a First Nations Child and Family Services Agency and the Ministry of Corrections and Policing. Therefore, they are counted twice in this section of the chart.

²⁴ Three of these injuries were incidences of self-harm by the same male youth.

²⁵ This total includes two youth (one male and one female) who each attempted suicide on two occasions.

²⁶ All three self-harm incidents were by the same youth in closed custody.

²⁷ This injury involved an infant whose parent accidentally dropped her after falling asleep while feeding.

²⁸ These injuries include a suspected opioid overdose that could not be confirmed by toxicology due to the medications used to treat the condition, a surgery required for an infant with a pre-existing medical condition and a case where physical assault on an infant was suspected, but the police investigation was inconclusive.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES CHILD AND FAMILY PROGRAM STATISTICS

	December 31, 2013	December 31, 2014	December 31, 2015	December 31, 2016	December 31, 2017	December 31, 2018
Children in care ²⁹	2,846	2,852	2,931	3,072	3,268	3,199
Non wards ³⁰	1,646	1,744	1,784	1,874	1,980	2,038
Total ³¹	4,492	4,596	4,715	4,946	5,248	5,237
Ministry Foster Homes						
Foster Homers ³²	584	551	498	490	504	498
Foster homes with more than four foster children ³³	48	59	43	35	33	37
Children living in foster homes with more than four foster children	282	338	251	220	207	226

*All data is taken from Linkin and includes children in the care of the Ministry and those children apprehended off-reserve whose case management has been transferred to a First Nation Child and Family Services Agency on reserve.

²⁹ This number includes wards and those children with apprehended status.

³⁰ This number includes children/youth who are placed by court order in the custody of a designated Person of Sufficient Interest caregiver.

³¹ The Ministry of Social Services is no longer reporting on the total number of Children in care and Non wards, however, in keeping with past practice, the Advocate provided the total numbers.

³² Foster Homes – includes approved providers with Regular Foster Care, Therapeutic Foster Care or both.

³³ 'Children' refers to children in care.



BUDGET AND STAFF

Non-Statutory Expenditures	2017-18 Budget	2018-19 Budget
Personal Services	\$1,865,000	\$1,865,000
Contractual Services	\$421,000	\$421,000
Advertising, Printing & Publishing	\$38,000	\$38,000
Travel & Business	\$102,000	\$102,000
Supplies & Services	\$8,000	\$8,000
Capital Assets	\$22,000	\$22,000
Budgetary Total	\$2,456,000	\$2,456,000
Statutory Expenditures		
Personal Services	\$228,000	\$228,000
Statutory Total	\$228,000	\$228,000
Total	\$2,684,000	\$2,684,000

ADVOCATE AND STAFF (at December 31, 2018)

Advocate for Children and Youth: Corey O'Soup

Deputy Advocate: Lisa Broda

Associate Deputy Advocate: Leeann Palmer

Advocates

Joanne Denis
 Jamie Gegner
 Darren Hubick
 Chandra LePoudre
 Meredith Newman
 Jacqueline Peters
 Cheryl Starr
 Marcia Steuart

Investigators

Connie Braun
 Marci Macomber
 Joni Sereda (term)
 Karen Topolinski

Director of Administration:

Bernie Rodier

Communications Coordinators:

Dan Harder
 Kelli Thomson (term)

Administration Supervisor:

Caroline Sookocheff

Executive Administrative Assistant:

Wanda George

Administrative Assistants:

Michelle Beattie
 Penny Fairburn (term)
 Cheryl Heneghan
 Kara Howarth (term)



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