



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**May 8, 2019**

**Advocate for Children and Youth to Host Youth Led Conference on Mental Health  
Canadian Mental Health Association Mental Health Week May 6-12, 2019**

SASKATOON – The Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, Corey O'Soup, is hosting a youth led conference on the topic of youth mental health that will take place on May 9 & 10, 2019 in Saskatoon during the Canadian Mental Health Association's (CMHA) Annual Mental Health Week (May 6 to 12, 2019).

The conference, entitled, *Back Now in My Day: Our Issues, Our Time, Our Voice* is solely youth led and geared toward adult only participants who come from a diverse background of community stakeholders and organizational leaders in the public and private sector. This includes senior administrators and government officials, directors, policy-makers, philanthropists, private business, those who work directly with young people and many more.

O'Soup highlights the importance of Article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* that pertains to the right of young people to have opinions and for adults to listen to them. "It is critical to provide a forum for Saskatchewan young people to have a voice on issues that affect them. This conference allows a space for youth to speak to adult stakeholders who can listen to them about their struggles with mental health issues and, as a collective, show how systems can support meaningful solutions for change," said O'Soup.

These young change-makers will present on a variety of current issues related to youth mental health drawing from their own experiences with systems, adults, and their peers, including sharing their challenges and successes, and the coping mechanisms they have discovered.

"These young people will amaze you and we need to listen to what they have to say. Children and youth have the right to the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination. This includes having their mental health needs addressed to ensure their overall health, well-being and safety is met, no matter who they are or where they live," said O'Soup.

O'Soup is holding this conference during CMHA's 68<sup>th</sup> annual Mental Health Week to increase awareness and to "#getloud about what mental health really is." (CMHA, 2019). Collectively we need to keep a spotlight on the importance of mental health and to work together to break down the barriers to service and to support our youth.

"The barriers to accessing mental health services faced by children and youth based on their geographical location, lack of resources or unreasonable wait times amounts to a violation of their rights and is coming at a significant cost to the children and youth, their families, and our communities in this province," said O'Soup.

For those who cannot attend the conference, the Advocate will also be holding a public event on the evening of May 9<sup>th</sup> that is geared for parents, caregivers, and those who want to know more about what its like to be a young person today who struggles with mental health.

"Our youth planning committee felt very strongly that parents and caregivers also need to hear from them about the difficulties young people face and solutions that have helped them come out the other side," said O'Soup.

This event will include presentations from earlier in the day and while directed for parents and caregivers, anyone can attend. "Our young people are strong and resilient, but we need to hold them up and support them. We can do better, and must do better, for our young people to reach their full potential," said O'Soup.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. He leads a team of professionals who work on behalf of the province's young people. Our vision is that the rights, well-being and voice of children and youth are respected and valued.

For details of the Parent/Caregiver Night: Survivor 202 which is a public event visit [www.saskadvocate.ca](http://www.saskadvocate.ca)

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**For more information contact:**

Lisa Broda

Deputy Advocate

(306) 933-6700

lbroda@saskadvocate.ca