



# News Release

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## For Immediate Release

July 21, 2020

### NEW DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH OFFICE

B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth Jennifer Charlesworth is pleased to announce the selection of RCY's new Deputy Representative, Advocacy and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Relations, Samantha Cocker. Although the Office had a strong slate of candidates, Samantha was exceptional in so many respects and will be an outstanding fit for the organization.

"In these extraordinary times of reimagining Indigenous child welfare, it is truly an honour to have the opportunity to work with Samantha as our new Deputy Representative," said Charlesworth. "I look forward to working together with her as a vital part of our organization to advocate for systemic change that lifts up all children, youth, young adults and families. I am also humbled and impressed by how many talented candidates applied for the position and want to thank each one."

RCY offers gratitude to Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Chief of the Neskonlith Indian Band, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and a member of the First Nations Leadership Council, and Judy Smith, Director for the Ministry of Children and Families at Métis Nation BC for assisting as members of the selection panel circle and bringing their unique insights and wisdom to the process.

Samantha is of Cree and Scottish Ancestry and brings deep knowledge and insights into child welfare – particularly Indigenous child welfare – in B.C. She has more than 20 years' experience in a wide array of service areas. She comes to RCY from her current position as Deputy Director of Child Welfare, Aboriginal Services Branch at the Ministry of Children and Family Development in which she has played a leadership role in working with MCFD Executive to transform Indigenous child welfare. She has worked closely with Delegated Aboriginal Agencies throughout the province and is also a member of the Tri-partite Working Group – a sub-committee for Indigenous child welfare practice reform in B.C.

Samantha was Executive Director at Xyólheméylh (Fraser Valley Child and Family Services) where she spent years advocating for systemic change to ensure better outcomes for Indigenous children and youth and was instrumental in the creation of a youth-led advisory group and annual gathering – the Visions and Voices Forum for Youth in Care. She has been on the front lines of social work in communities around B.C. including Williams Lake, Kamloops and Prince George, and has done therapeutic work both with people experiencing addictions or substance misuse issues, and with children and families experiencing family violence.

Critical to her work with RCY, Samantha has extensive experience working in respectful, meaningful and sustained ways with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous leaders, communities, children, youth, families and other service providers around the province.

Samantha's background has prepared her well for the important role she will take up at RCY. In her position as Deputy Representative for Advocacy, she will work on the Office's expanded advocacy mandate serving young adults, ensuring that RCY is meeting the needs of as many young people in transition and in the Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waiver programs as possible in an effective manner. She will also work on the anticipated further expansion of the Office's mandate for youth who have transitioned out of care.

As Deputy Representative for the First Nations, Métis and Indigenous Relations branch at RCY, Samantha will work to ensure that as an organization, RCY is doing its best work in allyship with First Nations, Métis and urban Indigenous communities as they work to resume jurisdiction over their children and youth. Positioning RCY to support communities in this critically important work is no small task, but one for which Samantha is ideally positioned to assist. She will have the opportunity to support RCY and service systems in implementing and monitoring decolonizing practices called for by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Inquiry, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other reports.

Samantha Cocker begins her new role at RCY on August 31, 2020.

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