

# Annual Report 2021/22 and Service Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25



REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Sept. 30, 2022

The Honourable Raj Chouhan  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my pleasure to present the *2021/22 Annual Report and the 2022/23 to 2024/25 Service Plan* of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to the Legislative Assembly.

This document reports on the period April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 and covers activities underway and planned for the April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2025 period. It has been prepared in accordance with part 5, sections 17 and 19 of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Charlesworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth  
Representative for Children and Youth  
Province of British Columbia

pc: Ms. Kate Ryan-Lloyd  
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Kelli Paddon, MLA  
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

The Representative and staff, who do their work throughout the province, would like to acknowledge that we are living and working with gratitude and respect on the traditional territories of the First Nations peoples of British Columbia. We specifically acknowledge and express our gratitude to the keepers of the lands on the traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh peoples (Prince George) and the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations (Victoria) where our offices are located.

We also acknowledge our Métis and Inuit partners and friends living in these beautiful territories.

# Contents

A Message from the Representative for Children and Youth .....	3
Who We Are .....	10
Representative's Legislative Mandate .....	11
Accountability .....	13
Strategic Direction – "Paddling Forward" .....	15
Focus on Children and Youth with Vulnerabilities .....	29
Programs and Activities .....	32
Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement .....	33
Outreach and Engagement .....	51
Reviews and Investigations .....	58
Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research .....	74
Looking Ahead .....	90
Implementing RCY's Strategic Direction .....	91
Performance .....	108
Relevance .....	110
Responsiveness .....	111
Accountability .....	112
Excellence .....	113
Budget and Expenditures .....	116
Appendix .....	120
List of Outreach and Communications Activities .....	121

## Representative for Children and Youth



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth has been British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth since 2018.

Dr. Charlesworth has worked in the B.C. social and health care sectors since 1977. From 1980 through 1992, she served in front-line child welfare, social policy, program management and executive roles within government, and was engaged in formative work on deinstitutionalization, community inclusion for people with disabilities, womens' and girls' health, mental health and youth services. She served as the Secretary to three Cabinet Committees, including Social Policy and Aboriginal Relations, and was appointed to lead Cabinet Operations, facilitating a smooth transition between governments in 1991.

Dr. Charlesworth also supported the implementation of the 1995 Gove Inquiry into Child Protection recommendations and was a member of the executive team during the formation of the Ministry for Children and Families.

She left government in 1997 to complete her PhD on the power of womens' voice in the face of adversity, teach child and youth care at the University of Victoria and grow her consulting practice.

In 2006, Dr. Charlesworth transitioned into the non-profit sector and became the Executive Director of the Federation of Community Social Services of BC. During her tenure, the Federation grew in size, scope and influence, and worked with Indigenous organizations to co-create new ways to support Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families. Dr. Charlesworth also co-led a comprehensive review of child and youth residential care in collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

After leaving the Executive Director role at the Federation, Dr. Charlesworth became immersed in developing the leadership, innovation and cultural awareness of the community-based social care sector. She founded the Leadership 2020 program for the Federation, has served on numerous community boards and provincial advisory committees, and was a member of the Premier's Advisory Council on Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. In 2017, she became the Organizational Change lead at InWithForward – Canada's first social research and development collective that integrates person-centred social science research and design to generate meaningful social innovation. Since 2016, Dr. Charlesworth has also been working with Chief Wedlidi Speck and many other leaders to inspire culturally safer workplaces and services for Indigenous staff and people served.

Dr. Charlesworth lives in the traditional territories of the Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ peoples. She has a PhD in Child and Youth Care from the University of Victoria and an MBA from Oxford Brookes University in Oxford, England. She is an award-winning teacher, author, activist and a parent of two vibrant young adults who remind her daily of the power and promise of young people.



# A Message from the Representative for Children and Youth

The release of this *Annual Report and Service Plan* comes as I complete my fourth year as British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth – and my 45<sup>th</sup> year in the child and youth caring field. It continues to be the deepest honour to serve as the Representative and to do this sacred work alongside a strong RCY team, committed service delivery colleagues, First Nations and Métis leadership and the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth. And, as you will read on the pages that follow, the events of the past year and beyond have prompted some significant changes for the Representative's Office (RCY).

This has been an unprecedented period of change on the provincial landscape of child welfare and well-being. The onset of the global pandemic more than 2½ years ago has placed considerable and continuing pressure on B.C. families – emotionally, mentally, physically, financially and otherwise. COVID-19's ongoing impact continues to reveal substantial shortcomings and fragmentation in the public services that are meant to help children, youth, young adults and families – particularly in the areas of mental health and substance use.

The relentless and ever-evolving toxic drug emergency continues to harm people in every B.C. community and in all walks of life. This includes children, youth and young adults who are both directly and indirectly impacted. Despite the significant efforts of many – from front-line responders to legislators – the toxic supply and consequent crisis is rapidly morphing and challenging not only our service delivery systems but also our assumptions, beliefs and models of care.

In addition, significant short- and long-term staffing instability at the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) as well as other government ministries and community service providers has led to reduced or even, in some cases, non-existent supports for young people and their families across B.C.'s child- and youth-serving systems in general.

At the same time, government continues to be disproportionately intrusive in the lives of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, youth and families. Today, an Indigenous child is still 18 times more likely than a non-Indigenous child in B.C. to come into government care. This is an inexcusable continuation of the devastating legacy of residential schools, and it is something that simply must change.

First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous peoples have also been feeling the emotional toll of the continuing recoveries of the remains of their children and youth at former residential school sites across Canada. Since May 27, 2021 – when the recovery of more than 200 children by the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc Nation at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School site was announced – there have been similar and ongoing devastating recoveries in communities across the country. This has been, and continues to be, an extremely painful time for many Indigenous communities and families who are



processing these losses while still experiencing racism, discrimination and the intergenerational trauma that residential schools and colonial laws have created.

These are volatile, uncertain and complex times. But while there are many unprecedented challenges, there are also exciting developments that bring hope and possibility. As a result of the federal *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families*, some individual First Nations in B.C. are in the early stages of asserting jurisdiction over their own child welfare services and, in the process, they are reimagining child well-being from a cultural and community perspective. The federal government has proposed a settlement in response to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal findings that, if it proceeds, will enable First Nations to enhance prevention and healing resources for their communities, which will help their young people thrive. This is a long and complicated journey, but it is an important beginning.

In addition, there is growing awareness and acceptance of the need for a harm-reduction mindset and services to support young people who are affected by the toxic drug supply and problematic substance use. These conversations were not happening when I began my term in 2018. This is indicative of an openness to finding new solutions to complex and vexing social issues.

Considered together as the environment in which we work, all these factors – both negative and positive – have prompted RCY to re-evaluate how we can be of greatest help and make the biggest impact as an advocacy and oversight Office.

## Paddling Forward

The changing environment made it obvious to RCY leadership that the status quo was no longer an option. Therefore, we have moved ahead in a new strategic direction – known internally as Paddling Forward – to help us better meet the changing needs of B.C.'s children, youth and families and the various factors affecting them.

As part of this strategy, we have carefully considered all the external factors previously cited and identified a number of key priority areas that we are focusing on now and into the coming fiscal years. These priority areas include:

- **Services and supports for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families.** Advocating for equity, culturally appropriate services and an end to discrimination, as well as assisting in any way we can with the assertion of jurisdiction by Nations over their own child welfare, is RCY's No. 1 and overarching organizational priority.
- **Child and youth substance use and the toxic drug supply.** Too many young people are dying, suffering injuries or experiencing the emotional toll of losing parents, friends and loved ones. RCY is advocating for a robust and effective array of voluntary services and supports including harm reduction and treatment options, both of which have long been lacking in B.C. In addition, our work in this area has revealed how important it is to better understand grief and loss, and how children can be better supported.





- **Child and youth mental health.** RCY will focus on assessing and addressing COVID-19's persistent negative impacts on mental health and advocating for enhancements to B.C.'s voluntary system of mental health care, which has been inadequate since well before the pandemic hit.
- **Children and youth with support needs and those experiencing multiple, complex challenges.** RCY will continue to advocate for a whole-system approach to children and youth who face myriad challenges, to ensure they are cared for and that a sense of belonging is fostered for them. We will also advocate for access and equity in supports for families whose children have special needs and monitor progress on the implementation of MCFD's new support needs framework.
- **Supporting families to nurture their children and youth as a critical prevention strategy.** RCY will explore and advocate for ways that early interventions can help foster the healthy development of children and keep more families safely together.
- **Residential services for children in care.** For those children and youth who cannot live in a family home, RCY will advocate for improvements to a residential system in B.C. that supports connection and belonging rather than adding to the trauma young people have already experienced.
- **Transitioning to adulthood.** RCY continues to advocate for sufficient supports for young people who are without family privilege at what is a key stage in their lives.
- **Child rights, voice and representation.** As a rights-based organization, RCY will continue to lift up the rights of children and youth to have their voices heard and considered in the key decisions that are being made about their lives, particularly in legal matters under the *Mental Health Act*, *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and *Family Law Act*.

## Structural Changes

We have modified our organizational structure at RCY to better address the shifting landscape and deliver what is required. This process has led to a realignment of our five internal work teams.

While RCY's two Deputy Representatives work together with me in a senior leadership triad, Deputy Samantha Cocker has assumed responsibility for the Office's two restructured teams. One of those is the Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement team. In addition to the individual advocacy work that has always been at the heart of RCY's mandate, this unit has responsibility for essential activities such as youth and community outreach and the continuing development and implementation of an engagement strategy and working agreements with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous organizations and entities.

The second restructured team at RCY is the Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research unit. Systemic advocacy is the term RCY now uses for the "monitoring" function that is described in our legislation. This team, which is fundamental to the mandate of RCY, monitors, reviews, audits and conducts research and produces reports on public, designated services and programs for children, youth and families and identifies and makes recommendations for change. The First Nations, Métis



and Inuit Research function of this team also includes systemic advocacy, with a sole focus on services for Indigenous children, youth and families.

RCY's other Deputy Representative, Pippa Rowcliffe, has responsibility for Reviews and Investigations and Corporate Shared Services. The role of the Reviews and Investigations team has remained consistent as a central function of RCY's oversight mandate. This team receives and reviews critical injury and death reports submitted to RCY for children and youth in care or receiving reviewable services, conducts investigations and prepares public investigative and other special reports released by the Representative. The Corporate Services Team – including finance, human resources, information technology and privacy – provides services not only to RCY but also to B.C.'s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHR) under an agreement that has been in place since 2020.

The Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team now reports directly to the Representative.

These structural changes have combined to allow RCY to deploy its resources and staff more efficiently to focus on the targeted priorities identified above and to remain as nimble as possible during these changing times.

## **Complexity, Volume and our Work**

As RCY has re-examined and refocused its work in some areas, our Office's non-discretionary workload has continued to increase and grow more complex.

Our Reviews and Investigations team continues to handle record numbers of injury and death reports. The total number of in-mandate critical injuries and deaths for fiscal 2021/22 was 2,516, representing an increase of 31 per cent over the previous fiscal year. This continues a recent trend of dramatic annual increases, representing a 191 per cent lift since 2016/17.

These increases are likely due to better reporting by MCFD as well as to an overall increase in critical injuries attributable to such factors as the toxic drug supply, impacts of the pandemic on mental health, increased sexual exploitation and violence, and gang-related activities.

Even greater increases in reports of critical injuries and deaths are on the horizon. Reporting to RCY from regional health authorities in relation to mental health and substance use services for children and youth began slowly in the 2021/22 fiscal year. Once fully underway across all health authorities, this new reporting will contribute to a further increase in RCY workload.

Meanwhile, the workload of our Advocacy team remains high and is increasing in complexity. For the fiscal year 2021/22, RCY Advocates served 1,787 children, youth and young adults either directly or indirectly through their family members and caregivers.

While there has been a downward trend of new advocacy files opened since 2016/17, the intensity and complexity of RCY advocacy work has increased. Advocates are spending significantly more time in case meetings related to the children, youth and young adults they are supporting. The total hours



our Advocates spent in such meetings more than doubled between 2019/20 and 2021/22. We also see growing complexity through the number of months that files remain in active status, and the number of service areas involved for each child, both of which have continued to increase.

In addition, an important amendment to the *Representative for Children and Youth Act (RCY Act)* that came into effect in February 2022 now allows RCY to advocate for young adults up to age 27 – an increase from the previous age cut-off of 24. This change has increased the population of young adults eligible for RCY advocacy services by 60 per cent, and we expect it to influence our workload in the coming years.

## New Ways of Working

Strengthening our relationship with partners – and, in particular, First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous partners – is critical to the success of RCY.

One of the ways to strengthen such relationships is to provide better value and assistance to these partners. A March 2022 RCY report – *At a Crossroads: The roadmap from fiscal discrimination to equity in child welfare* – did just that by helping to clarify the often confusing funding structures for Indigenous child welfare in B.C. and pointing out the current disparity in funding for many Indigenous children (see report graphic, page 88).

A key ingredient contributing to the report's success was the collaboration between the RCY project team, who contributed a strong Indigenous worldview, an external expert advisor with detailed understanding of provincial funding systems, and the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy in Ottawa, which provided much of the base research for our report. This is an example of a way in which RCY is working differently. Rather than having to be the "experts" on every area we examine, we are often now partnering with external advisors, research organizations and community partners to tap into their expertise and combine it with our unique oversight role. This allows us to conduct higher quality, better-informed work in shorter time frames. Over the coming years, we are partnering with a number of post-secondary institutions and community agencies to conduct research in our other priority areas.

Another way we have endeavoured to work differently over the past several years is to conduct our research and investigations in more culturally sensitive and appropriate ways, using Indigenous approaches and methodologies whenever possible. A good example of this was our investigative report *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging* (see report graphic, page 86), released in June 2021 that told the story of a Dene girl whose life tragically ended on her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday due to toxic drug poisoning.

The investigation team that researched and presented Skye's story was led by Indigenous RCY staff members. The research methodology used by the team was significantly influenced by an Indigenous worldview, in which it is understood that there are multiple stories, perspectives and truths that are relevant to any situation being considered – an approach that helps to make sense of complex situations. These diverse stories and perspectives contributed to a more fulsome and holistic understanding of Skye, her family, the people connected to her and the situations they faced.



At RCY, we are also trying to listen more attentively to what our community partners and B.C. families need from us. An example of this was the report *Excluded – Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and their Families* (see report graphic, page 87), released in April 2021. In this project, we consulted deeply with children, families and people with lived expertise regarding FASD to produce a report that raised awareness of this disability and made recommendations to improve services for children with FASD and their families.

Strategic knowledge mobilization is another way in which we are fundamentally changing the way we work at RCY. Rather than limit the reach of our initiatives to the public release of a single report, our Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team is leading an effort to extend the reach of RCY projects to help strengthen the quality and effectiveness of practices, programs and policies for children, youth, young adults and families.

Knowledge mobilization initiatives have thus far focused on two reports: *Excluded* and *Skye's Legacy*. To spread the knowledge from our April 2021 *Excluded* report, we featured our external researcher from that project in an RCY-created video that offers valuable and accessible perspectives from somebody who has FASD. We have also completed a shorter version of the *Excluded* report to help those working with children and youth with FASD to better understand and serve young people with the disability.

To spread knowledge from *Skye's Legacy*, we are working to assist MCFD and other organizations in engaging leaders and staff to learn about the importance of belonging for children and youth – particularly for Indigenous children and youth. To that end, we have created a dedicated webpage that houses resources on belonging and we are staging a series of webinars and workshops for leadership and staff from the ministry, Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs) and community service organizations.

## Internal Enabling Mechanisms

As part of our restructuring, we have examined and modified the internal "enabling mechanisms" that help us to do our work more effectively. These ensure that we are as effective and focused as possible – so that we are able to pull on the right levers to encourage systemic improvements.

For example, part of our role in helping the Indigenous Governing Bodies established by First Nations and Métis communities with assertion of jurisdiction – and also in addressing service inequities for Indigenous children and youth as well as the over-involvement of child welfare in the lives of Indigenous families – is ensuring that our own staff have the training and supports they need to better understand the complex factors at play.

To that end, we have offered and will continue to offer all RCY staff training in cultural safety, anti-racism and both trauma-informed and restorative practices. We have had a cultural safety advisor working on contract with RCY since November 2018 and, in September 2021, we hired Yuxwelupton on a temporary assignment to develop the permanent role of RCY's Knowledge Keeper as well as Elder and Matriarch Circles that will guide our future work with communities. We have also searched for ways to



strengthen our relationships with Indigenous partners, including ICFSAs, B.C. Friendship Centres and First Nations and Métis leadership.

We have conducted, or are currently conducting, a number of internal reviews at RCY to improve these mechanisms, including:

- A thorough review of RCY's annual budget from the ground up. We believe that such a review is warranted this year and reflects good practice and our commitment to use resources wisely in this difficult fiscal climate.
- A review has been conducted of the Corporate Shared Services agreement between RCY and the BCOHRC. While both Offices continue to support this arrangement, it is important to build on the experience of the last two years and improve effectiveness and efficiency.
- RCY's administration and project coordination needs have evolved over time and ensuring the most focused and efficient use of resources is essential to our success. A review of administrative functions has been completed and the recommendations will be implemented during the 2022/23 fiscal year.
- The pandemic has dramatically accelerated plans that RCY had previously developed to gradually move toward a greater degree of remote working arrangements and decentralization of staffing. Most staff now have the option of working remotely, which resulted in the closure of our Burnaby office in 2021. We are planning to establish regular "clinics" at community service agencies in the Lower Mainland and rent meeting space, as needed, for our advocacy staff who are physically located there.
- It is expected that these changes will enhance and diversify RCY staff recruitment, especially in relation to prospective Indigenous candidates who may want to continue living in or nearer to their home communities and prospective staff from smaller communities who may be deterred by the costs of housing in urban centres. These changes – as well as a current review, decolonization and reorientation of RCY human resource policies – may also help with staff recruitment and retention over the long term.

The document that follows outlines the approach to meeting my accountability to young people and families, the public and the Legislature to report on the activities of the Office and plans for future years. It describes the activities of the Office during 2021/22 and outlines RCY's planned strategic initiatives for 2022/23 to 2024/25. It provides a full and comprehensive picture of the Office's accomplishments over the past reporting period, plans for future years and how RCY's work to achieve its mandate, vision and goals will be measured.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth  
Representative for Children and Youth



# Who We Are



# Representative's Legislative Mandate

The *RCY Act* defines our key areas of responsibility and activities. These include individual advocacy, reviews and investigations and monitoring – or systemic advocacy – as described below.

<b>Advocacy</b>	To provide information, advice and assistance to children, youth, young adults and their families who need help in dealing with designated or prescribed services or programs provided or funded by government; to help them to become effective self-advocates with respect to those services; to support and promote the development of advocacy services within communities; and to comment publicly on advocacy services for children and their families with respect to <b>designated services</b> .
<b>Reviews and Investigations</b>	To conduct reviews and undertake investigations of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth who have received <b>reviewable services</b> and to identify and make recommendations for improvements to services to prevent similar injuries or deaths in the future.
<b>Monitoring</b>	To monitor, review, audit and conduct research on the provision of <b>government-funded designated services or programs for children and youth and their families</b> and to identify and make recommendations for change to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of those services.

Each of these three areas of responsibility have a distinct scope and reach. Reviews and Investigations focuses on **reviewable services**, which are services or programs under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCS Act)* and *Youth Justice Act* and also include mental health and addictions services for children and youth.

Individual advocacy has a broader scope and reach with **designated and prescribed services** which include but are not limited to:

- family support
- child protection
- foster care
- adoption
- guardianship
- children and youth with disabilities
- early childhood development and child care services
- mental health and addiction services for children
- youth justice
- services for youth and young adults during their transition to adulthood
- Community Living BC (CLBC) services for young adults between their 19<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays
- services under the Agreements with Young Adults program and the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program for eligible young adults between their 19<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays.



The Representative is very pleased that the mandate for our individual advocacy work was extended in 2021 from a young person's 24<sup>th</sup> birthday to their 27<sup>th</sup> birthday. This aligns with the new age range for the Transitions to Adulthood programs that were announced by government in 2022.

Under the systemic advocacy (monitoring) function, the Representative has authority to monitor and review the designated child and youth services noted above. In addition, under the s.20 provisions of the legislation, the Representative may review other government-funded programs and services for children and youth where she "*considers it necessary to do so.*" This work culminates in a special report that is made public. This enables RCY to take a whole-child approach to meaningfully inform public policy, especially when the well-being of a young person is supported by multiple systems, such as health, education, housing, income security and child and family services.



*Photo of Long Beach, Tofino on the traditional territory of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation of the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples, taken by Aaraksh Siwakoti.*





# Accountability

The Representative's fundamental accountability is to the children, youth and young adults of B.C., upholding their rights to be safe, healthy, educated, supported with specialized care as needed, connected to culture and family and be heard. Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and youth in B.C. is at the heart of the Representative's work. In honouring this responsibility, the Representative is guided by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)* and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*.

The Representative is an independent officer of the Legislature, appointed by the members of the Legislative Assembly as a whole. The Representative reports to the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth (SSCCY), an all-party committee of the Legislature responsible for fostering greater awareness and understanding among legislators and citizens about the B.C. child- and youth-serving systems. Every one of the Representative's public reports is reviewed by the SSCCY providing a public forum for discussion.

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (SSCFGS) is responsible for reviewing the annual reports, three-year service plans and budgets of all independent or statutory officers of the Legislature. Under this authority, the SSCFGS considers and makes recommendations on the annual report, service plan and budget for the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth for each fiscal year.

The financial accounts of the Representative are audited each year as part of the B.C. government's annual audit of its Consolidated Revenue Fund.



## Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates

The Representative is a member of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA), an association of government-appointed advocates, representatives and ombudspersons for children and youth from the 10 provinces and two of the three territories: Alberta, B.C., Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Québec, Saskatchewan and Yukon. The 12 members of the CCCYA work to advance the rights of children and youth and to promote their voice.

The CCCYA members meet regularly and work together to identify areas of mutual concern and develop ways to address issues at a national level. In 2021/22, the CCCYA met twice: a virtual meeting on May 26 and 27, 2021, and a hybrid meeting (some in-person and some virtual attendance) on Oct. 6 and 7, 2021. For the past two years, B.C.'s Representative has hosted bi-monthly learning sessions for staff in all of the advocates' offices, with a focus on youth engagement and participation.

The Representative is also a member of the CCCYA Systemic Issues Working Group, which tracks and monitors emerging issues and identifies matters of shared or national interest. This group enables the Council to determine how best to use its collective strength to advocate for more responsive, effective and equitable services and supports for young people and families.

During the 2021/22 fiscal year, the CCCYA issued the following statements:

- May 7, 2021, on National Child and Youth Mental Health Day, calling on governments for significant mental health planning and investments for young people during and after the pandemic
- June 1, 2021, acknowledging the 215 children discovered at the former residential school in B.C. in unmarked graves and the heartbreak experienced by their families and communities
- Nov. 17, 2021, for National Child Day (Nov. 20, 2021), urging all Canadians to call on government to safeguard the rights of children and youth
- Dec. 13, 2021, on the 30th anniversary of the ratification by Canada of the *UNCRC*, reflecting on the poor outcomes in Canada in relation to the overall well-being of children and youth and raising the example that the *Criminal Code* still permits the corporal punishment of children.



## Strategic Direction – “Paddling Forward”

All citizens in B.C. have been impacted in some way by the dual public health emergencies that have demanded attention, care and action, especially over the past 2½ years. In 2016, the Provincial Health Officer declared a public health emergency due to the impact of the toxic drug supply on British Columbians. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 further disrupted and challenged families, communities and service systems. Long-standing and pressing issues for children, youth, young adults and families have been illuminated and exacerbated by these dual public health emergencies. Complex challenges and weaknesses in multiple systems have been laid bare and families and service providers that were barely coping prior to 2020 have struggled to meet the needs of young people.

What this has meant for RCY – as will be illustrated throughout this annual report – is that the nature and volume of our work has shifted. Advocacy work has become far more complex, the volume of injury and death reports has increased substantially, and some complex systemic issues have become more pronounced and urgent. RCY’s work takes place within this context and we must continually reflect upon and improve how we do our work and what we work on. A drive for continuous improvement helps us benefit young people and their families and communities and support informed public policy in these challenging and uncertain times.

The previous RCY Strategic Plan guided the Representative until the middle of fiscal year 2021/22. As the pandemic wore on, it became apparent that we needed a new plan in order to be even more nimble, responsive and effective. Over the last half of 2021/22, the strategic direction, priorities and goals of the Office have been renewed. RCY’s new Paddling Forward strategy aligns with the pressing issues that children, youth, young adults and families in B.C. face and will guide the Office’s attention, energy and resources over the coming years.

COVID-19 challenged RCY to adapt internal structures and processes to support staff in new ways of working so that we could fulfill our mandate during the pandemic. We learned a great deal about what does and does not work well and we continue to apply this learning as we emerge from the pandemic. Review and renewal of RCY’s structure, policies, processes, practices and ways of working are embedded in the Paddling Forward strategy. These “enabling mechanisms” support the well-being of staff; ensure that staff have the training, supervision and tools to do their work effectively; foster more collaborative and creative work across teams; ensure that the funds entrusted to RCY are used responsibly and effectively; and help us meet commitments under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People’s Act (DRIPA)* and make progress on decolonizing our policies and practices.





*Photo of canoe at the National Indigenous Peoples' Day event in Victoria on the traditional lands of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lekwungen (Songhees) First Nations, taken by Aaraksh Siwakoti.*

To best understand the **Paddling Forward** strategy and its components, RCY is using the metaphor of canoes on a shared journey. The **canoes** represent RCY itself. A great deal of care and attention has to go into the design and construction of the canoes so that they are built to purpose – sturdy, swift and able to keep the paddlers safe and secure so that we reach many important destinations along the journey. Embedded in the design and construction of the canoe are RCY's six core values of relationship, respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility, and repair and restoration, and the four principles of cultural safety and anti-racism, trauma-awareness, restorative practice and complexity thinking. These Six Rs and Four Ps, as they are known internally, are foundational to everything we do. Much has been done this year to strengthen our RCY canoes and prepare ourselves for the journey ahead, and this work will continue in the years to come.

The **paddlers** in the canoe represent RCY staff. United by their passion for and commitment to the well-being of children, youth and young adults, they paddle together to effect meaningful and sustainable change in social care services and systems. Given the many challenges and heartbreaks inherent in RCY's work and journey, staff health and well-being is an essential organizational responsibility, which is supported by the contents of the canoes, described below.

The **paddles** represent what we are pulling for – the goals and priorities of RCY and the projects in which we engage that shine a light on the experiences of children, youth and young adults and that demonstrate how practices, services and systems can better meet their needs and aspirations.



The **supplies** within the canoe represent the maps, resources, tools and sustenance that the paddlers need in order to do their work in a good way. An understanding of the landscapes and territories over which we are travelling and the places that we are paddling towards are captured in the "maps" we create for our diverse projects. These include project charters, research designs, methodologies, engagement strategies and guidelines for stewarding our projects from beginning to end. Although we have multiple canoes travelling to different destinations along the way, our maps guide us towards a shared destination of lasting, positive life experiences and outcomes for children, youth and young adults in B.C.

Of course, no difficult journey is successful without help and encouragement. RCY is incredibly fortunate to have **strong, respectful and reciprocal relationships** with many individuals, organizations and networks who sometimes paddle with us, and sometimes greet and support us on the shores. This includes Elders and Matriarchs, Knowledge Keepers, leaders in government and agencies, researchers, service providers, family members and of course young people themselves.

RCY's canoes are on a long journey and the tempestuous nature of an ocean or river – with fast currents, back eddies and constantly changing conditions – helps to describe the complexity of the child-, youth- and young adult-serving environments in which RCY works. Constant surveillance and vigilance is needed to understand changes and to adapt to new conditions.

## Our Canoes

### Values and Principles

#### *Our Values – the Six Rs (Six Wisdoms)*

Over the past year, RCY has restated the core values that guide our work both internally and externally. The Six Rs were initially inspired by Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt's original work on the Four Rs (Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility) that are necessary to make higher education more relevant to Indigenous students and their collective aims. Over time, these ways of being were adapted and applied to guide relationships between Indigenous-led and non-Indigenous-led entities and Indigenous research, and they grew from Four Rs to Five Rs with the addition of Relationship.

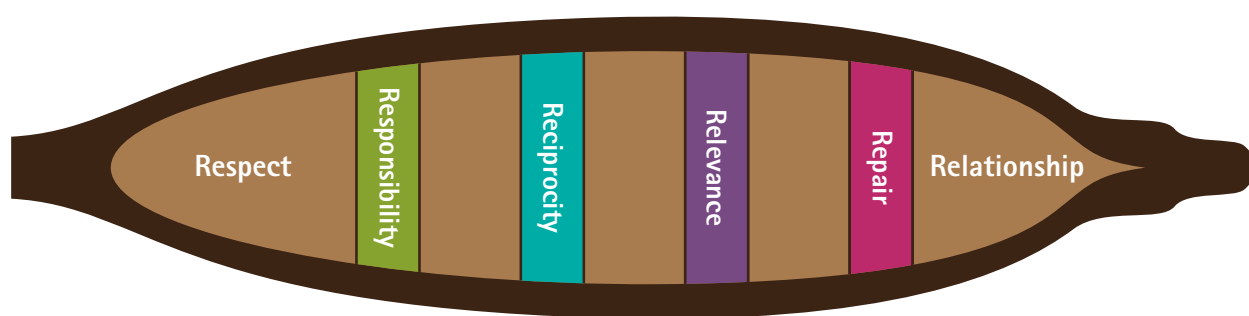
RCY first applied the Five Rs in the investigative work and research that culminated in the report, *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging*, released in 2021. Through this experience, the Representative and RCY staff learned that the Five Rs can be applied to all that we do, such as engaging young people, families or communities; advocating for child and youth rights; building strong project teams; understanding diverse perspectives on challenging issues; developing and implementing project plans; drafting and releasing public reports; or working with the public bodies over which we have an oversight function and to whom we direct recommendations.

In November 2021, with the Representative's release of the Paddling Forward strategy, a sixth R was added – Repair or Restoration. RCY has made a commitment to live into the values of the Six Rs, also more recently known as the Six Wisdoms, and each team has discussed and defined how these apply



to their work and areas of practice. The Six Rs are intertwined and complementary. Briefly, the Six Rs embody the following:

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



### *Our Principles – the Four Ps*

In the fall of 2018, the Representative engaged a cultural safety advisor, Harley Eagle, to assist her and the leadership team to better understand the dynamics of the organization and identify opportunities to improve our ways of working, particularly in three areas: recruiting, supporting and retaining Indigenous staff; improving relationships with First Nations, Métis and Urban Indigenous communities, organizations and leadership; and becoming a healthier and more positive workplace.

Mr. Eagle proposed that RCY develop its understanding and capacity in four areas: cultural safety and anti-racism, trauma-awareness, complexity thinking and restorative approaches. These are now known as the four principles or Four Ps. Staff training and development opportunities have focused on building individual and collective knowledge and understanding in three of these areas thus far. The fourth principle (restorative approaches) will be our learning and practice focus in 2023. Mr. Eagle continues to assist and guide RCY towards full engagement of the Four Ps.

The nature of RCY's work requires that we continually work towards being a culturally safer, anti-racist, trauma-aware and restorative organization, that is able to work skillfully within a complex, multi-system context. Briefly, the Four Ps encompass the following:

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



## Our Organization: Structures and Processes (Enabling Mechanisms)

Under the **Paddling Forward** strategy, RCY has reviewed and refined its internal structures and processes (what RCY refers to as its enabling mechanisms) to meet its mandate and deliver on its priorities in an efficient and effective way.

### *Refined Organizational Structure*

RCY's organizational structure has been adapted to better reflect the work of the Office in providing both individual and systemic advocacy,<sup>1</sup> and to acknowledge the importance of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous engagement and research in these areas. The organizational approach also fosters cross-team collaboration to ensure complex issues are addressed in a fulsome way, drawing on expertise from across teams.

Two Deputy Representatives support the Representative and work together to ensure alignment and coordination of the work of the Office. They also have core responsibilities: one Deputy is responsible for the Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement and Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research teams and the other Deputy is responsible for the Reviews and Investigations and Corporate Services teams. Corporate Services includes finance, human resources, administration, information technology and privacy support services for RCY. The Corporate Services team also provides core services to the BCOHRC and the Deputy is responsible for managing the RCY-BCOHRC agreement.

### *Changing Work Environment*

The pandemic accelerated the plans that RCY had to explore remote work arrangements and decentralization of staff. As pandemic closures began, remote work arrangements were initially put into place for all staff on a temporary basis. Given positive experiences with these arrangements and staff requests to continue working remotely, the Office implemented remote work options on a permanent and voluntary basis for almost all operational staff. This paved the way for decentralization of staff positions as it was no longer necessary to be physically present in – or attached to – an RCY office. This has enabled the Office to recruit people from throughout B.C. who wish to stay connected to their communities and culture, who are seeking more affordable housing and sustainable lifestyles for their families outside of the metropolitan areas, and who want to share their regional and local knowledge and relationships with RCY. Remote work options and decentralization are core components of our staff recruitment and retention strategy and our diverse staff enrich RCY's capacity in significant ways.

RCY now hosts only two physical locations in Victoria and Prince George; the Burnaby location was closed in 2021. All remote staff are now connected to Service BC or other government offices close to their homes. We are considering relocating the Prince George office to be closer to other youth-serving agencies in order to increase our connection to youth and improve accessibility of our services. In Victoria, we are adapting to fewer staff on-site and exploring ways to repurpose and share space.

<sup>1</sup> Note that "systemic advocacy" encompasses the formerly titled "monitoring" function, which is described in s.6 of the *RCY Act* as being carried out "for the purpose of making recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of that service." In short, the purpose of the monitoring function is systemic advocacy.







### *Corporate Services and Administration Reviews*

At the end of 2021/22, RCY and the BCOHRC were two years into an agreement for RCY to provide corporate services to the BCOHRC. This includes finance, human resources, information technology and privacy support services. The Representative and the Human Rights Commissioner remain committed to a shared services arrangement, and to ensuring that corporate services are being delivered to both organizations in the most efficient and effective way going forward. Consequently, the organizations retained an external consultant to review the agreement and implementation experience. This work



## Getting to Know RCY

Dianne – Corporate Services



### Why RCY in two sentences?

The role brought me to the Office, the retiring CFO (a previous co-worker) highly recommended working for the Office. Happy to report she wasn't wrong.

### Who most inspires you, living or dead, and why?

I find inspiration in a variety of people. If I had to pick one person that inspired me most, it would be an aunt (not a real aunt). She always had a smile on her face, time for everyone and shared her love freely. She was safety, warmth and love. It wasn't until I was much older that I understood how hard her life was and the hardships she had endured. Makes me love and respect her even more.

### Dog, cat or favourite pet?

Dog, sorry cat lovers.

### Best RCY memory?

The interview – really! My interviewers made me feel at ease and welcome right from the start. I knew that day RCY was a place I could work. BC Corrections was family, it was important that where I went would feel the same.

### Favourite meal?

Anything Mexican.

### This is not easy work. What keeps you motivated, especially when the going gets tough?

My work is supporting and holding up our staff (and the Office). Staff feeling supported and the Office having what it needs keeps me motivated.

### What's your ideal Sunday?

House full of family and friends for dinner (regularly 12 to 15).

### If you could change one thing for young people in B.C., what would it be?

Every child should feel safe and loved. It is heartbreaking to know that is not the case.

### What is your life motto or a favourite quote that you live by?

Always tell the truth, use kind words, keep your promises, giggle and laugh, stay happy and be positive, always be grateful, give thanks for everything, say please and thank you, SMILE.

### What does success look like for you?

Staff that are happy and feel supported so they are able to do the amazing work that they do.



was completed in March 2022. The review identified challenges as well as opportunities to refine the agreement and enhance and improve the ways in which services are provided. RCY and the BCOHRC are working together to review and implement the recommendations.

RCY's administrative and project coordination needs have also evolved and increased due to greater cross-team and external collaboration on projects and the need for more careful coordination of projects in the virtual working environment. To ensure the most efficient and effective delivery of administrative and project coordination services, in 2021/22, RCY initiated a review of its administrative functions and retained external consultants to complete the review. The consultants completed their work in April 2022. Administrative and project coordination roles have since been clarified and a new structure will be implemented in 2022/23.

### *Organizational Policy Review*

In light of the rapidly changing internal and external environment, RCY is conducting a comprehensive review of its human resource policies and procedures. This work began in fiscal year 2021/22 with a focus on building an organizational policy framework that is respectful, responsive, culturally safer and inclusive. The review and adaptation of policies will continue in 2022/23.

## Our Paddlers

### How We Do Our Work

Consistent with the Six Rs and Four Ps, RCY is committed to working relationally with children, youth and their families, as well as our other partners. RCY commits to listening carefully and intentionally to the experiences of those we serve and to our partners as we actively engage with them on projects and as we act as a convenor and catalyst to learn about and act upon the systemic issues that affect children and youth – particularly those in government care. Collaborative and relational practice is also embedded internally within the Office through increased cross-team connection and the alignment of knowledge and experience from the multiple perspectives that staff collectively bring.

One example of this commitment has been the engagement of a range of new and established partners, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in a conversation about children's early years and a possible role for RCY. Over a number of years, RCY's observation of stories and data from advocacy, reviews and investigations has been that youth in crisis began experiencing challenges much earlier in their lives when support to them and their families would have had a strong preventative effect. RCY's engagement on this topic has included three Indigenous circles, two online forums with B.C. service providers, funding for five B.C. early years research teams to establish a strong evidence-informed foundation for RCY's subsequent work, individual conversations with a range of professionals and collective conversations with some families (for more information see page 77).



Another example is RCY's continued strengthening of relationships and reciprocity with the First Nations Leadership Council, the Métis Nation B.C., the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and the Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency (ICFSA) Directors' Forum, formerly known as the Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAA) Directors' Forum. ICFSAs provide child welfare services to approximately 53 per cent of all Indigenous children and youth in care, in addition to a range of supports to those who remain living within their parental home, in out-of-care options, or on Youth Agreements. The vast and deep knowledge and experience of the ICFSA Directors and their staff – which is so generously shared with RCY – helps us better understand the evolving Indigenous child welfare landscape and our role in advocating for positive change now and into the future. However, there have been limits to RCY-ICFSA reciprocity. Currently, if information arises from our Reviews and Investigations mandate that is relevant to an ICFSA (e.g., a comprehensive review concerning a critical injury or death of a child in their care), RCY is required by legislation and policy to provide this information to MCFD, which then decides what is or is not shared with the ICFSA. RCY is seeking to amend legislation and policy to facilitate a more direct RCY-ICFSA relationship for all mandate areas.

A further focus during the 2021/22 fiscal year was expanded engagement with universities and affiliated institutes to bring the best current research evidence forward to inform and illuminate RCY priority areas of interest. This has been an important strategic approach that allows the best science and knowledge to be integrated into the insights that RCY gains from its individual advocacy, reviews and investigations and systemic advocacy work.



*Ceremonial paddlers at the National Indigenous Peoples' Day event in Victoria on the traditional lands of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lekwungen (Songhees) First Nations, taken by Aaraksh Siwakoti.*



### *An Example of Collaborative Practice*

## **Development of the *At a Crossroads* report**

During the 2021/22 fiscal year, RCY undertook a collaborative project that resulted in the report *At a Crossroads: The roadmap from fiscal discrimination to equity in Indigenous child welfare*.

To complete this project, the RCY project team engaged with the University of Ottawa's Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy and a retired MCFD subject matter expert to map the ecosystem of provincial and federal funding for Indigenous child welfare in B.C. As the title suggests, the report is about money, how it is spent and on whom, but it is also about human rights. Specifically, it is about moving toward equity for all B.C. children and families when it comes to the important government services that support them. The findings of this report are troubling. They show that the provincial government and MCFD have considerable work to do to ensure that the rights of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families to that equity are consistently upheld. At the present time, they are not (see report graphic, page 88).

## **Capacity and Development**

To ensure that the Office, its staff and programs are responsive to, culturally safer for, and reflective of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth it serves, RCY employs intentional strategies to attract and retain First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous staff.

As of March 31, 2022, 18 per cent of RCY's permanent positions are held by First Nations, Métis, Inuit or Urban Indigenous employees and our intention is to grow this number across the organization.

Impact and effectiveness require that RCY not only has a structure that supports excellent work, but also skilled and competent staff. RCY is committed to ongoing staff development and undertakes cross-organizational learning in cultural safety and anti-racism, trauma-informed practice, restorative practice and complexity. A comprehensive management training program is also being developed to better support the growth and development and the success of the management team.



*RCY Knowledge Keeper Yuxwelupton and his granddaughter.*



## RCY Knowledge Keeper

In recognition of the importance of having a Knowledge Keeper connected to RCY's work, the Representative created and filled that position in 2021/22. The intention is to support all staff to gain the required understanding of the historical and current impacts of colonization and provide guidance and advice to RCY Executive.

During this past fiscal year, there have been several noteworthy events across Turtle Island – the Indigenous term for North and Central America – that created the critical need for us to be responsive and adjust the focus and timelines of our work in order to respect the place so many Elders, Matriarchs and Knowledge Keepers were in, given the outpouring of emotion and the trauma. During this time, the Knowledge Keeper has provided support to RCY staff to work through the multitude of feelings that have resulted from the uncovering of the unmarked graves of children who were forced into residential institutions (schools) and never made it home.

The Knowledge Keeper has been immersed in the work of integrating the Six Rs and Four Ps into the day-to-day practice of RCY. The Knowledge Keeper has also provided support and guidance for the enabling mechanisms under the Paddling Forward strategy and is focused on nurturing relationships with Elders and Matriarchs to include them in the upcoming work of the organization.

As part of the development of the role of Knowledge Keeper within RCY, we are engaging Executive and staff for their input. This engagement will help inform the role to best support the ongoing work of RCY as we move forward.

## Our Paddles: Strategic Priorities and Goals

The overall purpose of the Representative is to make a positive difference in the lives of children, youth and young adults in B.C.

RCY does this through individual advocacy as well as initiatives and projects intended to influence government policy, programs and services and help improve systems of care so that children, youth and young adults are well supported by programs and services that are timely, appropriate, accessible, culturally attuned, trauma-aware and compassionate.

Three core themes cut across all the initiatives and projects of the organization:

- **Belonging** – Belonging is a necessary human experience, and through the experiences of belonging to family, community, school and culture, young people come to discover themselves, their place in the world and their interconnectedness with others (their identity). Through belonging, young people develop mastery, generosity and independence. Belonging is both a philosophy and a strategy, meaning that it is foundational to development. It also serves as a lens through which care plans, policies, programs and practices may be assessed and designed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Derived from the Circle of Courage model developed by Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Dr. Larry Brendtro and Dr. Steve Van Bockern and outlined in *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future* (Bloomington, Indiana: National Education Service), 1990.



- **Jurisdiction** – Indigenous Nations and communities are working directly and collectively with provincial and federal governments through a range of processes to assert their inherent right to jurisdiction over their own children and families based on the standards and principles of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* and of *UNDRIP*. RCY is committed to walking with Nations and communities and their agencies in these efforts and to ensuring that the work of the Office is aligned with and supports the movement toward jurisdiction over child and family services.
- **Equity** – Many children, youth, young adults and their families have long struggled to have access to adequate resources or the supports necessary to have their basic human needs and rights met. This is particularly true for First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Urban Indigenous and racialized people. While equality is about everyone having the same access to the same thing, equity recognizes that services and supports need to adapt to meet the unique and diverse needs of young people and their families and that some will need more than others due to historical and contemporary disadvantages and harms that they have experienced. The principle of substantive equity envisions that all children and youth are able to thrive. Jordan's Principle is one measure that supports this evolution and change for First Nations children and ensures that no child is left behind due to systemic or political barriers.

The Representative has established a renewed set of strategic priorities informed by insights gained through reports of deaths and injuries, RCY's individual advocacy work with children, youth and young adults, the ongoing monitoring of provincial data and relational work with partners on the front line.

RCY's key strategic priorities are:

- **Indigenous child welfare** – supporting assertion of child welfare jurisdiction by First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities while concurrently influencing systemic change to improve services to Indigenous children and youth in the shorter term.
- **Child and youth substance use and the toxic drug supply** – working closely with the BC Coroner's Service, the Provincial Health Officer, service providers and advocates to raise awareness about the impact of the toxic drug supply on children and youth, and advocate for a robust array of voluntary services and supports.
- **Mental health services** – advocating for a culturally attuned, evidence-informed and youth-focused approach to the provision of mental health supports with a focus on the intersection between mental health and substance use.
- **Children and youth with support needs and those experiencing multiple, complex challenges** – encouraging a comprehensive and equitable policy and program/service transformation for children and youth with support needs.<sup>3</sup>
- **Keeping families safely together** – guiding attention to, and advocating for investment in, policies, programs and services that better assist families with vulnerabilities to successfully and safely raise their children. There is a particular focus on families with children in their early years.

<sup>3</sup> MCFD has recently re-named its existing Children and Youth with Special Needs (CYSN) services stream, now calling it Children and Youth with Support Needs.



- **Residential services** – catalyzing improvements to residential services for children and youth, including those with complex needs, with a strong focus on enhancing the quality of these services.
- **Youth transitions** – continuing to monitor the implementation of a comprehensive array of transitional support services for young adults who have left care to ensure their transition to adulthood is successful and to advocate for changes as needed.
- **Child rights, voice and participation** – promoting children's rights generally – including children's participation, voice and representation in decisions affecting them – and especially for the rights and needs of children who are more vulnerable due to their life circumstances and/or societal beliefs and attitudes that impact their well-being.

The work of each RCY team is guided by these strategic priorities. The priorities cut across the core work that each team conducts as well as the special reports and investigations on which RCY embarks.

## RCY Priority Areas





## Focus on Children and Youth with Vulnerabilities

The Representative advocates for the rights of all children and youth in B.C.

However, the focus of the Representative's work is those children, youth and young adults who are receiving reviewable or designated services from MCFD or other public bodies delivering child-, youth- and young adult-serving programs including:

- family, youth and children in care services delivered under the *CFCS Act*
- guardianship and adoption services
- early childhood development and child care programs
- children and youth with support needs
- child and youth mental health programs
- substance use services for children and youth
- youth justice services.

RCY collects and analyzes a wide range of data and undertakes research internally and in partnership with universities and related institutes to identify trends and issues, understand conditions and circumstances of children, youth and young adults needing support and services and inform RCY's strategic direction and priorities.

### Children and Youth in B.C. BY THE NUMBERS

<b>5,037</b>	Number of children and youth in care as of March 31, 2022
<b>3,425</b>	Number of Indigenous children and youth in care as of March 31, 2022
<b>847</b>	Number of youth who aged out of government care and Youth Agreements in fiscal year 2021/22
<b>28,662</b>	Number of children and youth with support needs eligible for supports as of March 31, 2022
<b>6,579</b>	Number of 19- to 24-year-olds receiving services from Community Living BC
<b>1 in 8</b>	Number of children in B.C. ages four- to 18-years-old who will experience a mental disorder causing significant symptoms and impairment at any given time
<b>29</b>	Number of illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 among youth under the age of 19
<b>11</b>	Average daily number of youth in B.C.'s two custody centres in the 2021/22 fiscal year

**Sources:** MCFD, CLBC, BC Coroners Service, B.C. government fact sheet



## Getting to Know the Representative

Jennifer Charlesworth



### Why RCY in two sentences?

I have wanted to be a part of RCY since the Honourable Ted Hughes recommended its formation in 2006 (applied to work here four times in fact – three times as Rep and once as Deputy). Many incredible people have shared powerful teachings about advocacy and change with me over the years and I felt that RCY was the place I could weave all of them together to support our young people.

### Who most inspires you, living or dead, and why?

My father was an incredible person – unfailingly kind, generous, open-minded and open-hearted. He experienced a lot of adversity and loss and turned that into compassion and love for others, regardless of their path in life.

### Dog, cat or favourite pet?

Dog! I am raising my fourth golden retriever. Mara is now a boisterous 15-month-old and I am training her as a therapy dog.

### Best RCY memory?

Four presentations to our Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth stand out because we did collaborative presentations with the late Katherine McParland, families of children with FASD and Indigenous leaders. They were powerful and emotional.

### Favourite meal?

Salmon and corn on the BBQ and salad from my garden.

### This is not easy work. What keeps you motivated, especially when the going gets tough?

The prospect and possibilities of change and making things better, safer, kinder for children, youth, young adults and families has kept me going for 45 years in the field. I have seen lots of really great change and positive things happen, so I know it is possible.

### What's your ideal Sunday?

A long walk or hike with Mara and friends, time in my garden, and preparing food for the week while listening to music or a podcast. And maybe an afternoon nap!

### If you could change one thing for young people in B.C., what would it be?

More support to families (broadly defined) to enable them to support their children well.



**What is your life motto or a favourite quote that you live by?**

I love Pema Chodron's phrase "You are the sky, everything else is weather." Keeps me focused on the bigger picture when I am feeling buffeted by storms.

**What does success look like for you?**

Success isn't an endpoint or outcome for me. I am more inclined to think about being "successful" in the way in which I carry myself e.g., am I present and loving for my children and friends, am I respectful of the lands I live on, am I doing caring work in the world, am I finding joy?



# Programs and Activities



The three legislative mandates of RCY – Advocacy, Critical Injury and Death Reviews and Investigations, and Monitoring – are undertaken by the three core program areas of: Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement; Reviews and Investigations; and Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research.

The core programs are supported by the Communications and Knowledge Mobilization and Corporate Services teams with all teams working together to implement RCY's Paddling Forward vision and strategy.

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

### Overview

Advocacy for young people is at the heart of RCY's work. The Individual Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Engagement team is responsible for two key areas of work at RCY: advocacy for children, youth and young adults, and engagement. Providing high quality advocacy services to children, youth and young people and their families is essential to ensure that young people are supported to access the services and supports they need. The team is also responsible for undertaking broad youth and community outreach and engagement in order to enhance awareness of both RCY and children's rights; build advocacy capacity in child- and youth-serving organizations; and engage with and establish relationships with First Nations, Métis and Urban Indigenous communities and organizations.

In 2021/22, members from this team also led RCY's work on the report *At a Crossroads: The roadmap from fiscal discrimination to equity in Indigenous child welfare* (March 2022) which maps child welfare funding and service delivery in B.C. (see page 88).

### Individual Advocacy

Systems of child-, youth- and young adult-serving services in the province are complex and it can be challenging for those in need to identify, access and obtain services.

The Representative's Advocacy team provides information, advice and assistance directly to:

- children, youth, young adults and their families in relation to government-funded designated services
- young adults from their 19<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays who are eligible to receive services from CLBC, and
- young adults up to their 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays who:
  - are on, or are eligible for, an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA)
  - are on, or are eligible for, the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program (TWP).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In the fall 2021 legislative session, an amendment to the *RCY Act* was passed and subsequently proclaimed in February 2022 allowing RCY to advocate for young adults up to the age of 27 (changed from 24). This increases the population of young adults eligible for RCY advocacy services by 60 per cent.



Advocacy staff help children, youth, young adults and their families by:

- supporting them to make connections to services and programs they need
- discussing their rights and what to do if those rights are not being upheld
- facilitating discussions about the care and services they need, or are receiving, and the decisions made about them
- supporting them to speak up in a way that might solve their problem and helping them to become effective self-advocates with respect to the services they need
- assisting with transitions out of MCFD care
- assisting young people who are eligible to access AYA and the TWP
- assisting young adults who are eligible as they transition to and receive services from CLBC.

## Advocacy Data

As reported in the 2020/21 *Annual Report and Service Plan*, RCY's database, CITAR, was re-developed and launched April 1, 2021. The practice of how Advocacy staff capture information in CITAR has changed significantly over the years and the new system will improve RCY's ability to understand data collected and how individuals who connect to the Office may be experiencing designated services.

The most significant change to the system is the ability to relate advocacy issues to individuals rather than a case file. In addition, the redesigned system allows us to better capture the complex nature of situations by ensuring we can more easily analyze the issues associated with any given child. In previous annual reports, the Office reported on "case files" opened every year. A case file was opened for an individual child, youth or young adult based on a reported issue. There were circumstances where another file was opened for the same child if there was a new issue reported. New files were also opened if there were siblings requiring advocacy. Over time, this approach to capturing file information proved to be administratively heavy and did not allow us to gather and analyze information in a meaningful way, nor did it support the case management process effectively as information was disjointed across multiple files.

The new system and supporting tools have increased administrative efficiency, improved information management and are more focused on the "whole child" and the multiple issues for which they may require advocacy. Over time, they will enhance RCY quality assurance and audit functions as well as help identify themes, barriers and policy issues that will inform the systemic advocacy work of the Office.

As this is the first year of our new CITAR database, we are limited in comparative year-on-year data; however, by this time next year we will have two fiscal years' worth of data to analyze. Therefore, this year's report presents a blend of the ways in which we reported in previous fiscal years with some new metrics which will establish baselines for comparison in future years.



## Making Contact with RCY

Many of those contacting the Representative's Advocacy team are assisted at the initial intake stage by an Intake Advocate through the provision of information, advice and referrals to services and programs. This support might include coaching or advising an individual on how to approach a social worker or service provider, resolve an issue, or access a complaints process. Often, Intake Advocates support individuals with ongoing information, support and coaching in effective self-advocacy to ensure their concerns are addressed and dealt with appropriately. In many situations, this is all the support that is needed. However, should a caller's situation require further support, an Intake Advocate will refer the file to an Advocate for additional follow-up and to conduct an assessment of the specific issues raised. In the course of the assessment, the Advocate will connect with relevant people involved, including the child, youth or young adult, and develop an advocacy plan for next steps. Once the Advocate completes these steps, they have a strong understanding of the advocacy issues and will work with all involved to highlight the young person's rights, views and/or best interests throughout the process.

An Advocate also follows up with a child or youth to discuss outcomes of advocacy efforts, address any outstanding issues and develop further actions. They also reconnect with the young person's social worker to discuss the outcome and update them on the status of the Advocacy file.

When contacted by individuals about issues outside the Representative's mandate, the Advocacy team will provide a referral to an appropriate agency or service.

### Fast Fact

Less than half of youth surveyed who were approaching the transition out of care into adulthood felt prepared to pay bills and budget (45 per cent) or find housing (43 per cent).

**Source:** McCreary Centre Society (2022), *Youth Transitioning Out of Care*



*RCY Advocates Tracey and Lisa on the Alaska Highway during their Northeast visit.*



# Advocacy Intake for Children, Youth and Young Adults

The Representative for Children and Youth makes sure the voices of B.C.'s young people are heard.

We know that situations can be complicated and sometimes it's scary to ask for help.

That's one of the reasons we're easy to contact.

What happens when you call our Advocacy line at 1-800-476-3933, text at 1-778-404-7161, chat from our website at [rcybc.ca](https://rcybc.ca) or email [rcy@rcybc.ca](mailto:rcy@rcybc.ca)?

**You'll be put through to an RCY staff member. What you say will be kept private.**

**That person will determine how we can help you.**

- Maybe you don't know how to make connections to services you need.
- Maybe you want to discuss your rights and what to do if those rights are ignored.
- Maybe you need information about the right organization to talk to or suggestions on how to explain what you want.

**Sometimes you might need more help from us to resolve the issue. If that's the case, you'll be provided an Advocate to help you. An Advocate is a person who will listen to you and help you amplify your voice. They will promote your rights and best interests.**

- An Advocate can help you get the care and services you need. You might want help reconnecting with your family, community or culture or putting together an action plan. Maybe you feel like your social worker isn't listening to you or including you in planning. An Advocate can support you to speak up in a way that might resolve the issue.
- Depending on the circumstances, an Advocate can help to ensure your needs are planned for as you transition out of MCFD care or connect to CLBC services. An Advocate can also provide you with information and support regarding the Agreements with Young Adults program and Tuition Waiver program.





### *Advocacy Case Example*

## **Intake Supporting Self-Advocacy**

The RCY Intake Advocacy team received a message from a youth's extended family member named Jane living in another province for a request for advocacy for Stacey, a youth who is receiving services from MCFD in B.C. An Intake Advocate connected with Jane to gather information regarding her concerns and to determine if her concerns were within RCY's mandate.

Jane shared that she had provided care for Stacey for many years but could no longer meet Stacey's complex needs and therefore shared guardianship with MCFD. Jane was concerned about the quality of care being provided to Stacey while she resided in a staffed resource in B.C. Jane's concerns included that there had been multiple moves for Stacey in part due to complex behaviours she exhibits because of a diagnosis of FASD, ADHD and mental health concerns including past trauma. Jane shared that she felt pressured by the youth's social worker to resume care of Stacey whenever she raised her concerns with the level of care and supervision being provided to Stacey in her group home. Despite Jane's concerns, the social worker believed Stacey was satisfied with her placement and did not want to change it as she had already experienced several placement breakdowns. From Stacey's perspective, she felt that her views were being considered and she wanted to remain in the group home.

However, Jane was concerned that as a previous long-term care provider for Stacey, she was not being included in regular meetings to discuss planning for Stacey, provide insight on her behaviours or share information about her care needs. Jane felt that her input and concerns were not being taken seriously by Stacey's social worker and therefore nothing was improving for Stacey. The Intake Advocate provided Jane with information about care standards in B.C. and what type of placement options and services are available for youth in MCFD care. The Intake Advocate also suggested that Jane include the social worker's team leader in written correspondence to the social worker requesting she be included in care team meetings and provided Jane with contact information for the ministry and referrals to other support services.

About a week later, Jane emailed the Intake team again after having a conversation with the team leader about her concerns and indicated that she felt progress had been made. Jane had additional questions about next steps to ensure that she continued to be included in planning and experienced effective communication with Stacey's care team. Over the next three months, Jane was supported to address concerns as they arose through emails from the Advocacy Intake team coaching Jane on how to word her concerns and who to share them with if she felt that they were not being taken seriously. The information provided to Jane was to support self-advocacy and included options and tips for effective communication, what services are available and can be requested, and what options there are for accountability within the system such as escalating a concern with the care team or filing a complaint.

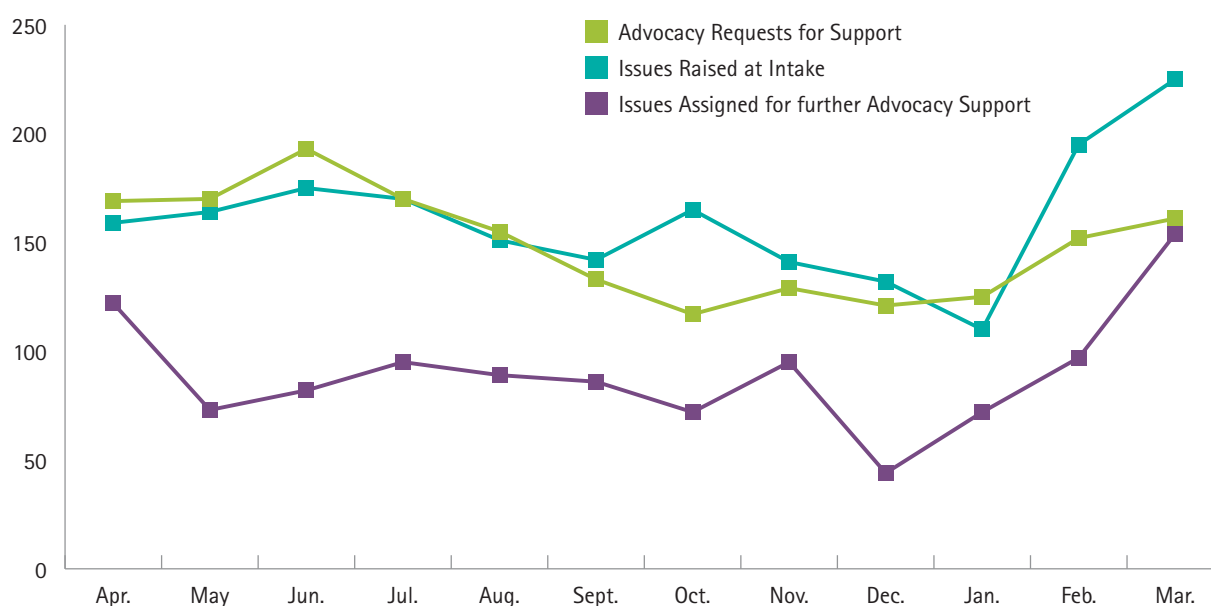


Figure 1 below illustrates the progression of Advocacy involvement, and includes the numbers, for each month of 2021/22, of:

- advocacy requests
- advocacy issues determined by the Intake Advocates at the intake stage
- issues worked on by Advocates once a referral was made from the intake stage.

In total, 1,795 requests were received from the public by phone, email and chat/text for service in the 2021/22 fiscal year. From those requests, 1,929 issues were raised with the Intake Advocates that required information, advice or support. Of those 1,929 issues, 1,081 or 56 per cent were assigned to an Advocate for further assessment, support and/or direct advocacy.

**Figure 1 – Advocacy Requests and Advocacy Issues for Fiscal Year 2021/22**



\* This information cannot be compared to previous years due to changes in data collection and storage methods.

\* This chart identifies advocacy requests and issues identified and entered in the system between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022 and is not related to the number of cases opened.



## Definitions of Issues

For every request for advocacy support, the Intake Advocate works to understand the situation and how the involved children are being impacted. They do this by breaking down the concerns into "issues" that have standard definitions that have been informed and defined by the Advocacy team, based on their collective experience. This approach enables the Advocacy team to analyze the information from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Examples are as follows:

*Ineffective Planning/Supports:* Some services are in place but they do not meet current or future needs of the child, youth or young adult (CYYA). Appears that an appropriate service does not exist and/or no planning has taken place (i.e., respite funding is not enough; counselling frequency or type is not right for the CYYA; service is mismatched to the needs of the CYYA in some way). This would include situations where the CYYA are living at home and receiving services but service is not enough to be sustainable or effective for the family and young person.

*Disagreement with or concern about a decision:* A decision has been made but there is some indication that the decision may not have been made with appropriate legal authority or, for example:

- was not made in accordance with applicable rules, laws and policies
- was not based on relevant or sufficient information/decision not well-informed
- did not consider the individual needs and circumstances of the person affected (may include a lack of assessment or consideration of social/cultural background, expert recommendations) or
- was not based on rules that are fair (unjust, discriminatory or unreasonably burdensome).

*Information Request:* Request for information and advice needed to navigate service.

*Lack of Respectful Engagement:* Service is in place and/or approved but the service provider does not offer respectful and courteous treatment, for example:

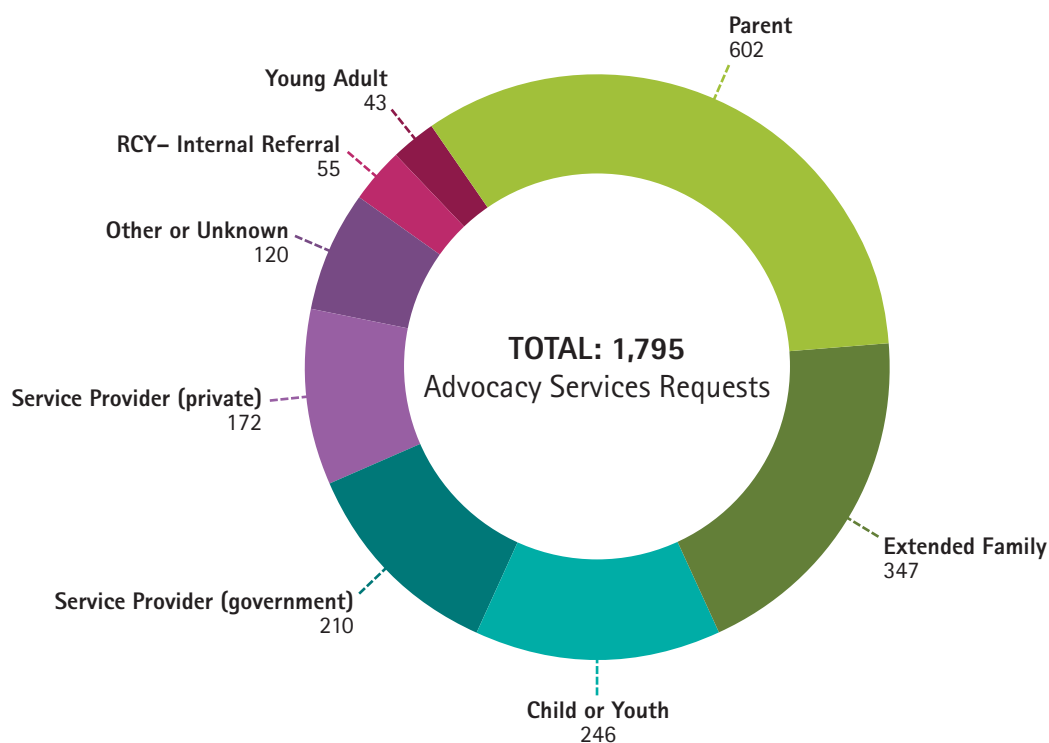
- does not engage in active listening
- is not honest and forthright
- does not make information clear and easily accessible
- is not transparent about what they can and cannot do
- does not respect confidentiality
- is not accountable or doesn't provide an apology if a mistake is made
- does not ensure timely responses to inquiries
- does not provide reasonable consistency in service (including consistency in staff).



## Highlights of Advocacy Activities and Trends in 2021/22

For the fiscal year 2021/22, the Advocacy team served 1,787 children, youth and young adults. Figure 2 illustrates who is contacting RCY on behalf of children, youth and young adults. Parents and extended family remain the largest portion of individuals requesting information, advice, support and direct advocacy for their child(ren).

**Figure 2 – Who is requesting advocacy services? Fiscal 2021/22**



\* This information cannot be compared to previous years due to changes in data collection and storage methods.

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

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

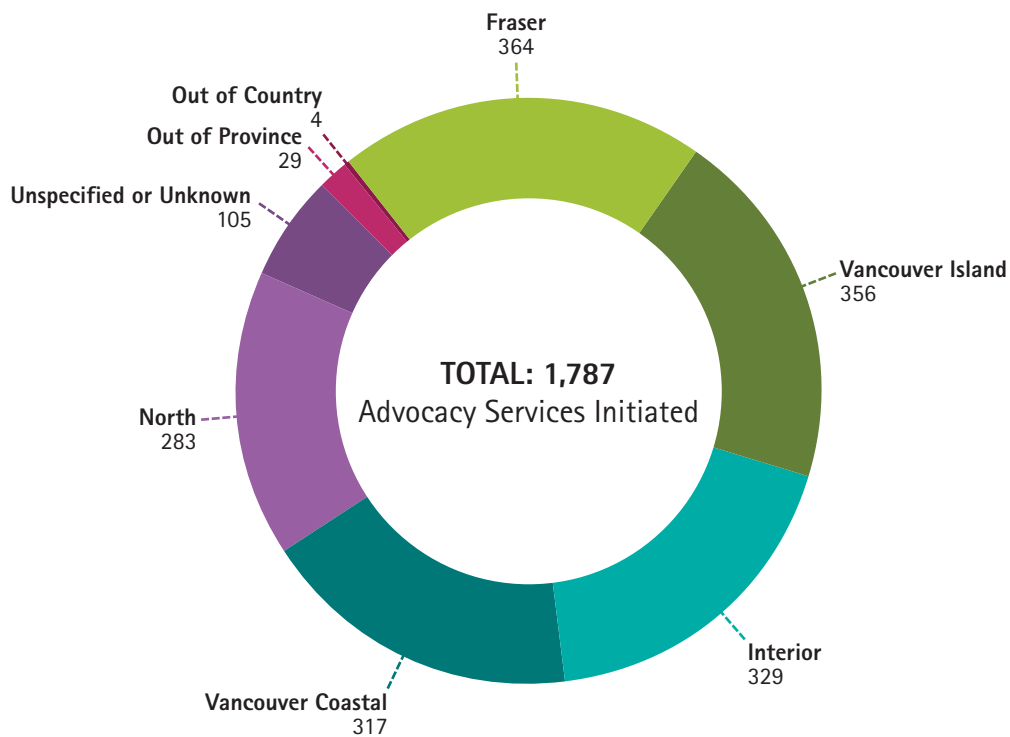
\* On occasion, RCY receives more than one call from different parties about a child. As a result, the requests for service number is slightly different than the number of young people served.

Of the 1,787 children, youth and young adults served, 50 per cent are of First Nations, Métis or Inuit heritage. Approximately 40 per cent of intake files created were forwarded to an Advocate for deeper assessment and/or further advocacy. Of that 40 per cent assigned, 60 per cent are of First Nations, Métis or Inuit descent.



Figure 3 identifies where the 1,787 young people were residing in the province at the time service was initiated. Of note, lower populated regions appear to request service at a higher rate than more heavily populated regions. This may be an indicator of the challenges in accessing services in more remote or rural areas. While the figure below identifies where the children, youth and young adults were located when initiating contact, the region they were receiving service from may be different for some children, youth and young adults who are living outside of their community.

**Figure 3 – Where Children, Youth and Young Adults Resided when Advocacy Service was Initiated**



\* This information cannot be compared to previous years due to changes in data collection and storage methods.

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



### *Advocacy Case Example*

## **Belonging**

Kelly came into care as a young child and had experienced multiple moves. At one point, Kelly was moved away from her family because her home community did not have a staffed residential resource that could meet her needs. There have also been extended periods of time in which Kelly was unable to attend school and, as a result, she missed out on the consistent and caring relationships that can develop with teachers and peers as well as a sense of belonging as a member of her school community. Kelly actively befriended adults outside of the care system who were street entrenched, criminally involved, and struggling with addiction issues. She also had involvement with the police who have been called in to intervene and de-escalate her when staff at her residential resource could not keep her and/or themselves safe. Police and restraint had become the last stop on MCFD's parenting continuum.

Because she has had numerous social workers, lived in several staffed residential resources in multiple communities, and has accessed many services including health, education, mental health and addictions, Kelly has needed to adapt to hundreds of adults coming into and out of her life.

Kelly does not want to live in a staffed residential resource but rather, wants to live with a foster family where she can bring home friends and not have to explain why her home has staff instead of parents. Although Kelly's Advocate brought forward her request for a family foster home, the involved MCFD team was not able to support this request. Due to ongoing concern about where Kelly was finding her sense of belonging and whether her current residential resource would be able to meet her needs over the long-term, Kelly's Advocate shifted their attention to how MCFD was nurturing Kelly's sense of belonging. Kelly's Advocate noted that when her social worker developed an intensive plan for consistent connection to her biological family, culture and First Nations community, she started to settle. Kelly has been able to remain in her current resource, while the staff there have also received additional supports. In addition, the frequency of police involvement has decreased. The connection to her family has given Kelly a sense of self-worth and positive self-regard. Kelly's RCY Advocate is proud of her and honoured to witness how her connection to family and immersion in cultural teachings has enabled Kelly to redefine who she is as a person and how she walks in this world.



The Advocacy team has also added a new element to its information gathering in relation to issues worked on beyond the intake stage. Advocates can identify issues that were resolved, partially resolved or unresolved by the system. Issues that have been resolved by the system mean that no further advocacy is required, and that the resolution is satisfactory to the participants involved.

Issues that are partially resolved by the system are often where some elements of the situation have been resolved but not all elements of the issue have been resolved (e.g., siblings living in separate homes now have regular visits with each other but access is not as often as the young people had requested).

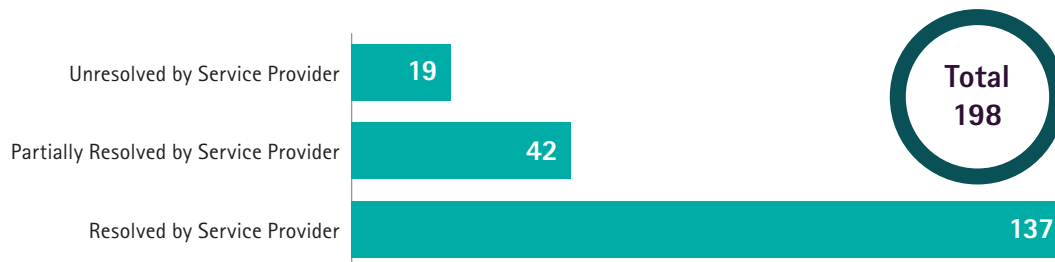
When the issue has been unresolved by the service provider, this usually indicates that there is a systemic barrier preventing the resolution of the issue (e.g., a lack of resources or no professional in the community to provide the service). There are also some situations where the resolution sought may not be reasonable or in the best interests of the child, youth or young adult. Based on a small sample of closed files where all advocacy work is completed, Figure 4 below shows 69 per cent of the 198 issues were resolved and 90 per cent were either resolved or partially resolved.

**Fast Fact**

Research has shown that cultural continuity can prevent physical illness and suicide and is a major predictor of overall mental wellness and stability. It is further understood that the biggest factor in ensuring cultural connectivity is relationships, which are central to all Indigenous community life.

**Source:** RCY (2021), *Skye's Legacy* report

**Figure 4 – Issue Status for Files Closed in 2021/22**



\* This information was taken from files closed in the 2021/22 fiscal year. Files that are still open and being worked on were excluded from this data set as the information may change as the advocacy work progresses.



### *Advocacy Case Example*

## **Children and Youth with Support Needs**

Cordon had been diagnosed with both physical and developmental support needs. When his RCY Advocate became a part of his team, his caregiver was working on applying for At Home program funding. The caregiver was also financially strained because he had left his job to care for Cordon who could not attend daycare due to his medical support needs. Due to the level of care Cordon required, the caregiver was unable to properly attend to his own medical needs or general household management. The only opportunity the caregiver had to do these things was when Cordon was napping or working with his Behavioral Interventionist. Although Cordon was receiving services through MCFD's CYSN stream, his caregiver had applied to 26 different programs seeking additional support. Cordon was eligible for direct funded respite and supported child development funding but was wait-listed for both programs.

Initially, Cordon's RCY Advocate provided some advice around the submission of paperwork for the At Home program and played a supportive role at planning meetings. Cordon was approved for the At Home program and his caregiver chose to access the medical benefits as opposed to the respite services given that Cordon was not eligible for both. Cordon was still wait-listed for direct funded respite but, in the meantime, due to Cordon's ongoing needs, his caregiver felt that he had no choice but to hire a housekeeper, despite the financial strain. The situation worsened, however, as Cordon stopped napping, a community program was temporarily closed, and his caregiver experienced a personal medical issue. At this point, Cordon's RCY Advocate requested information from MCFD about Cordon's priority for service to ensure that these additional stressors were being taken into consideration. The Advocate also provided advice to the caregiver about the option of reaching out to the MCFD child protection stream to request additional supports and/or filing a complaint with MCFD or the Ombudsperson.

In recognition that Cordon's needs were still not being met, the Advocate also followed up with Cordon's CYSN team to advocate for homemaker services and to see if MCFD would consider doing a health and safety assessment to provide additional temporary supports. Due to these advocacy efforts, homemaker services were approved for several months and then extended. Eight months after the RCY Advocate started working with Cordon, his caregiver reached out to them and shared the exciting news that, due to MCFD's recognition of the intensity of Cordon's needs, CYSN was able to prioritize Cordon to receive direct-funded respite much earlier than expected. In the end, due to the focused and joint advocacy of both the caregiver and RCY, enough MCFD supports were secured to finally allow rest and recovery for both Cordon and his caregiver.





## Focus of Advocacy work

As in previous years, the bulk of the advocacy work remains focused on designated services that are connected to child welfare (81 per cent),<sup>5</sup> with 69 per cent involving MCFD and 12 per cent involving an ICFSA. Designated services provided by provincial and regional health authorities account for 2.4 per cent of issues and 1.7 per cent of issues are CLBC-related.

The top five service areas presenting in RCY's advocacy work revolve around child protection services, guardianship services, youth services, family support services and residential resources.

Within these service areas, the top three issues or areas of concern at the intake stage are:

### Top three issues at Advocacy Intake stage:

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| • Ineffective planning/supports                 | 26 per cent |
| • Disagreement with or concern about a decision | 21 per cent |
| • Lack of respectful engagement                 | 17 per cent |

When issues are assigned for a deeper assessment and advocacy support, the top three issues change slightly:

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

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| • Ineffective planning/supports                 | 35 per cent  |
| • Disagreement with or concern about a decision | 16 per cent  |
| • Lack of respectful engagement                 | 6.4 per cent |

<sup>5</sup> Calculated by counting the number of times MCFD and an ICFSA are documented as the service provider involved in one or more issues. The agency is counted once per file although it may be associated with more than one issue within a file.



## Advocacy Trends

### Capturing Complexity

Over time, the intensity and complexity of advocacy work done by RCY Advocacy staff has increased. As RCY has adapted documentation and case management practices towards being more child- and family-centred, the increasing complexity of demand has become more obvious. For example, RCY is advocating for more children (sibling groups) within each individual file whereas previously one child, youth or young adult was attached to a file. Advocates are spending more time in case meetings related to the children, youth and young adults they are supporting.

- In 2019/20, Advocates spent 1,135 hours in either in-person or virtual meetings.
- In 2020/21, Advocates spent 1,796 hours in either in-person or virtual meetings.
- In 2021/22, Advocates spent 2,515 hours in either in-person or virtual meetings.<sup>6</sup>

This shows an increase in meeting time of 122 per cent from 2019/20 to 2021/22. The reasons for this include issues that reflect complexity such as the number of children, youth and young adults who are involved with multiple service providers and programs (e.g., special needs, mental health, protection and health care). These situations require more frequent communication and meetings to resolve issues.

Due to increasing complexity, the number of months that files remain in active status has continued to increase. For example, for fiscal year 2021/22:

- 80.7 per cent more files remained open between six and nine months compared to 2020/21.
- 27.8 per cent more files remained open between nine and 18 months compared to 2020/21.
- 58.7 per cent more files remained open for 18 months or more compared to 2020/21.<sup>7</sup>

RCY continues to improve its methodology to measure case complexity. With the changes to the CITAR system described below, RCY will be able to measure complexity by using indicators such as:

- where there are four or more issues requiring advocacy support or
- where there are two or three issues requiring advocacy support, and more than two service providers involved (e.g., protection, mental health and addictions services).

<sup>6</sup> RCY began recording meeting and travel time related to case work in 2019/2020.

<sup>7</sup> Reporting on case length is now done based on an adapted methodology to support a focus on impact. The data above represents files from case carrying advocates who carry a full caseload – advocacy group files, managers, intake and casual/temporary staff are excluded. These data may differ slightly from previously reported data.



### *Advocacy Case Example*

## **Youth Transitioning Out of Care**

John was in MCFD's care under a Continuing Custody Order and living in a staffed residential resource where he was the only resident. Approximately one month before turning 19 and aging into community, the youth called RCY to ask for advocacy support. John had been informed that he needed to pack up and move to a shelter as his resource was needed for another youth in care who was without a placement. John had been in his resource over two years and had supportive relationships with the staff. He felt blindsided by the information that he needed to move with only one week's notice, and just one month prior to his birthday. John shared that he did not want to move to the shelter which was being offered as the alternative as this would not be good for his mental health and requested advocacy support to stay at his resource until he turned 19 or to be supported in another resource. Three months previously, John's file had been reassigned to a new social worker – a traumatic move because he had a strong relationship with his previous social worker. As a result, John had less communication with his social worker and other service providers, and he felt he needed advocacy support to ensure his voice was heard.

When the RCY Advocate became involved, they discovered that there were outstanding needs for John such as incomplete dental care, incomplete applications for government supports such as a Person with Disabilities Designation or Income Assistance, and no plan to address John's mental health needs as an adult. The Advocate requested that the decision to move John to a shelter be re-examined and that he be allowed to stay in his resource. The Advocate suggested that if John had to move that he be transitioned to an Independent Living Agreement where he would be able to pay for accommodations and practise independence skills while still receiving support. The Advocate also asked if the youth could remain in his placement past the age of 19 and if supports could be extended through the Temporary Housing or Service Agreement which were emergency measures being offered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several meetings were held over the following two weeks to support John's participation in planning for his transition to independent living and aging into community. John was able to remain in his resource until he found suitable housing and was put on an Independent Living Agreement. After John turned 19, he was offered a Temporary Service Agreement to provide interim supports to maintain his housing and support services while waiting for adult mental health services to begin.



## Advocacy Outreach to Youth Custody Centres

Providing direct advocacy support and advice to youth in B.C.'s Youth Custody Centres continues to be an important part of the Representative's advocacy work.

RCY was able to maintain a presence at the Prince George Youth Custody Centre through virtual methods for the early part of the 2021/22 fiscal year. Starting in July 2021, RCY Advocacy staff were able to meet with youth and custody centre staff in person either in outdoor areas or in large meeting spaces in the centre in compliance with COVID-19 protocols. Virtual meetings provided consistency and opportunities for youth to connect with RCY; however, the ability to meet in person helped to build trust and a deeper connection between youth and Advocacy staff, resulting in youth being more open to raising issues and receiving advocacy supports.

In the past year, youth raised concerns they had both in the general operations of the centre as well as services available to them in the wider community. RCY supported youth at directors' meetings to assert their rights and speak up about their concerns regarding the day-to-day operations of the centre, including food and access to recreational activities. Advocacy issues raised by youth included wanting more contact with family members while in custody, their experiences while in the care of MCFD or an ICFSA, and the lack of access or availability of openings for services in the community.

Advocacy outreach at the Burnaby Youth Custody Centre was more restricted due to closure of the centre to in-person visits throughout 2021/22. Advocates were thus limited to providing direct individual advocacy supports via telephone to youth upon request. In-person visits will resume in summer 2022 with the intention of implementing more opportunities for youth to connect with RCY.

## Comparative Case Data

As previously mentioned, RCY has changed the way it captures and records advocacy data, beginning with the 2021/22 fiscal year. However, in the interest of continuity between this and recent RCY annual reports, comparative case file counts are also being provided for the past five fiscal years. Figure 5, below, highlights the total number of advocacy cases handled by RCY's Advocacy team between the 2017/18 and 2021/22 fiscal years.

**Figure 5 – Total Advocacy Cases by Fiscal Year – 2017/18 to 2021/22**

Fiscal Year	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Total Cases	1,533	1,589	1,596	1,371	1,348



*Bright Spot***Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA)**

Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) is a centre of Indigenous youth excellence, supporting youth on their journeys by amplifying and celebrating their voices. UNYA recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work for youth. The philosophies of two-eyed seeing, culture as therapy, trauma-informed care, harm reduction and person-centred care provide a framework that shapes how UNYA staff interact with youth in their programs. UNYA has several programs in Vancouver including a youth shelter and an Aboriginal Youth Safehouse (ASH). ASH is a voluntary, short-term, live-in program for youth ages 16- to 18-years-old who do not have a safe place to stay.

ASH is a supportive, non-judgmental place where youth can focus on creating goals and working toward making positive change. ASH works to build community around young people to offer more stability and access to supports in order to create a plan for longer-term success. ASH's youth workers connect youth to resources, help with goal planning, teach necessary life skills and help youth to move on to safe, stable, longer-term housing, with new connections to community resources for ongoing stability and support. ASH is always a source of support for youth who have stayed there, and UNYA hopes that youth will stay connected even after they have moved on. ASH accepts referrals from youth or service providers 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

On top of meeting a young person's basic needs, some of the offerings at ASH include help finding housing, work, training, school programs and community supports; visits from UNYA's counsellors and nurse practitioner; access to UNYA's transition team with youth workers from the safehouse available to support and advocate for youth in planning meetings; and access to technology such as the Internet and transit fare so that youth can travel safely. Additionally, ASH offers connection to Indigenous cultures through sharing teachings, providing access to arts and crafts, Elders and opportunities to learn about and participate in ceremony and smudging. ASH also helps to reconnect youth to their home community and family if this is one of a young person's goals.

Over the past year, the Advocacy team at RCY has worked with several young people who connected with the Representative's Office while staying at ASH.



## Getting to Know RCY

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



#### Why RCY in two sentences?

Because all children are potentially the light of the world – they deserve love, support, encouragement, for their voices to be heard and to develop to their fullest potential.

#### Who most inspires you, living or dead, and why?

Cindy Blackstock: For being a relentless champion of justice, child rights, Indigenous rights and for speaking truth to power.

#### Dog, cat or favourite pet?

Cats – cuddly, quiet and low maintenance.

#### Best RCY memory?

Spending quality time with all of my lovely, passionate, inspiring RCY co-workers at the May 2019 All-Staff Gathering/Advocacy Retreat in Victoria (also RCY music bingo).

#### Favourite meal?

Full course Indian or Thai dinner.

#### This is not easy work. What keeps you motivated, especially when the going gets tough?

Faith in the goodness of humanity, prayers for healing, outspoken youth, my amazing co-workers, dedicated social workers and laughter.

#### What's your ideal Sunday?

Being outdoors on sunny day, at a beautiful park with my wife, three kids, and other family/friends that I love – eating, singing, dancing and playing great music together.

#### If you could change one thing for young people in B.C., what would it be?

For all children in B.C. to have their basic physical needs and emotional needs met; aka an eradication of child poverty and all having a sense of belonging.

#### What is your life motto or a favourite quote that you live by?

"Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path." – 'Abdu'l-Bahá

#### What does success look like for you?

Being of service to others so "my greatest joy meets the world's greatest need." Helping others draw ever closer to knowing, loving and expressing their virtues and true noble selves.



# Outreach and Engagement

RCY engages in outreach and community engagement to establish an ongoing dialogue with those it serves and to work collaboratively to support children, youth, young adults and their families. The Outreach and Engagement team supports and promotes the development of community advocacy services and provides public education to ensure that young people, their caregivers and community service providers know about our work, children's rights and how to reach us. We seek to develop relationships with community members, supports and services, government ministries and programs, educators and young people.

The Representative is committed to engaging with youth in meaningful and effective ways in all the work of the Office. RCY strives to create opportunities to engage directly with youth about issues affecting them and to work toward solutions, including hearing and considering the lived experiences of children and youth to inform the activities of the Office and the recommendations made by the Representative.

In 2021/22, the Outreach team had anticipated a return to typical in-person outreach and engagement activities and initiatives but continued to be constrained – first by COVID-19 pandemic public health considerations, and then by prolific forest fire activity and widespread flooding in many parts of B.C. Throughout these trying times, the Outreach and Community Engagement team continued to enhance its abilities to reach more people through virtual engagement and focused on building outreach strategies as well as a plan for once public health measures were relaxed and a return to in-person engagement became possible. RCY worked collaboratively with community partners to respond to their requests for information in creative ways and focused on building trust, connections and relationships.

RCY has refined its approach to engagement to be more meaningful, relational and intentional. This has been done by embedding the Six Rs – relationship, respect, reciprocity, responsibility, relevance, and repair/restoration – into the work from pre-planning to completion. Reimagining the work through the philosophy of the Six Rs has required the team to examine how and why we do outreach and community engagement and how it has been disrupted by the global pandemic. With the inability to meet with people in person and the shift to virtual engagement, the team focused on building relationships through intentional planning, collaboration and strong follow-through.

## Fast Fact

Quality relationships with adults are important to all children and youth. However, they are especially important for children and youth in care. Adolescents without supportive adult relationships are often anxious, isolated and have trouble relating to others. When young people experience a caring relationship with an adult, they are more likely to have better experiences in school, healthier relationships with others, and are better equipped to overcome adversity.

**Source:** RCY (2021), *Skye's Legacy* report



The team sought to better involve partners in planning for workshops and presentations through:

- Sending pre-meeting surveys to participants to determine their knowledge and awareness of RCY. This information was used to tailor the information provided to each group and to gain a greater understanding of their role and the issues they encounter in their work with children, youth, young adults and their families/caregivers.
- Sending post-meeting surveys to gather feedback and evaluate the success of each event and the value of the information provided to participants, as well as provide opportunities for reflection and opportunities to improve/enhance future activities.

The information gleaned from these pre- and post-meeting surveys, was beneficial and guided the Outreach and Engagement team to explore additional digital tools and online platforms to support remote engagement. Social media platforms, webinar and meeting software including MS Teams, Skype for Business and Zoom, online collaborative tools like Miro and Zoom whiteboards, and survey platforms like Mentimeter and Slido were invaluable in creating more engaging and purposeful connections. We also refined and honed the information we share with the public, editing and creating new print materials, updating and refining RCY promotional items and informational materials to provide to different age groups. The team also used participant feedback to revise and refresh visual presentation information.



*RCY staff celebrating together at the National Indigenous Peoples' Day event in Surrey on the traditional territories of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Qayqayt and Tsawwassen First Nations. (From Left) Sophia M., Karla (Advocate), Sophia R. (Advocate), Jamie (Advocate).*





# Highlights of Outreach and Engagement Activities in 2021/22

## Youth Engagement

One of the most effective ways to create opportunities for young people to know about RCY, understand its mandate and engage with the Office is through community-wide efforts to educate those adults who care for and provide supports to children, youth and young adults including government workers, non-profit service providers, foster parents and school staff. Partnerships and community collaboration and the sharing of expertise, resources and responsibility have proven to be some of the best ways to reach and connect with children, youth and young adults.

Over the 2020/21 fiscal year, in addition to general outreach and engagement activities and in response to outreach requests to provide information and rights education, RCY worked on several projects with organizations and service providers to further the awareness of the Office and the rights of young people:

- **Empowering and Encouraging Self-Advocacy in Children and Youth Pilot Project** – This initiative involved working with Foster Parent Support Coordinators to plan and develop a four-part information series for foster parents focusing on greater knowledge and understanding of RCY, child rights and self-advocacy. This series was offered as a trial beginning in the central interior and northeast regions of the province in spring 2022, with plans to roll out to other regions in late 2022/23.
- **Funding Your Future sessions** – Through a collaboration with staff from the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society, MCFD, Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, the Public Guardian and Trustee, Douglas College, Thompson Rivers University, Vancouver Island University and young adults with lived experience in care, RCY supports the provision of online sessions informing young people of financial supports available to them as they pursue their academic and vocational goals. Information is provided on the AYA program, TWP, student loans, scholarships and grants, as well as specific public post-secondary institution supports for young people.

### Fast Fact

Youth surveyed who had care experience reported they were more likely to have mental health conditions, including anxiety/panic attacks (36 per cent vs. 19 per cent who had never been in care), depression (35 per cent vs. 15 per cent who had never been in care), ADHD (19 per cent vs. seven per cent who had never been in care) and PTSD (14 per cent vs. two per cent who had never been in care).

**Source:** McCreary Centre Society (2022), *The Mental health of Youth with Government Care Experience*



- **Rights Education in Alternative Schools Pilot Project** – RCY recognizes that students who attend alternate education programs often face unique challenges and have complex needs that require supports that are unavailable in the traditional school setting. These young people may be disengaged from home and community and accessing designated government services (such as child protection, child and youth mental health programs, substance use services, youth justice and/or children and youth with support needs services). Working in collaboration with School District 57 (Prince George), RCY has planned and developed a rights education program for district staff and students that will be rolled out in the 2022/23 school year.

In 2021/22, the Outreach and Engagement team also continued its proactive outreach and engagement with post-secondary institutions and other organizations to enhance awareness of RCY's expanded mandate for young people up to their 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays who are on or are eligible for the AYA program and/or the TWP.

RCY also continues to support a Social Media Youth Advisor to provide advice on how best to use social media to support youth outreach efforts and create original content for sharing via the Representative's social media accounts (for more information see page 55).



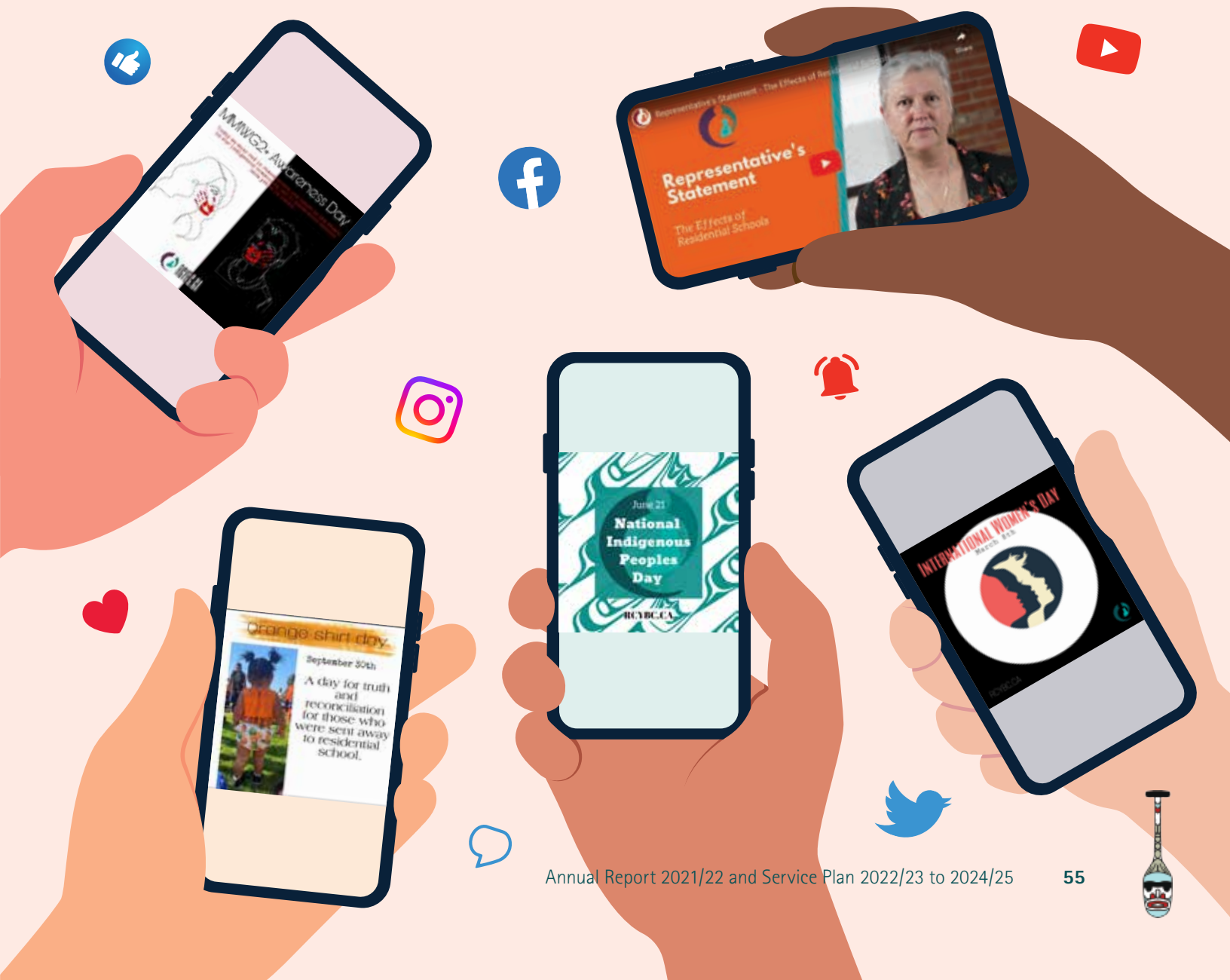
*RCY Advocates Chris and Tracey volunteering at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre's event on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh, in recognition of the first year after the discoveries of 215 unmarked graves in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory.*



# Youth Social Media Advisor

As part of the Representative's youth engagement, the Office employs a Youth Social Media Advisor to advise on and create youth-friendly content for the Representative's social media channels. This position is the first of its kind among child advocate offices in Canada and has been part of RCY's youth engagement and communications function since 2015.

In 2021/22, the Youth Social Media role provided key perspectives on highlighting awareness days such as National Indigenous Peoples' Day, Orange Shirt Day, International Women's Day and more. They also shared their unique experiences through the Kid Advocate podcast episodes, with their most recent episode highlighting the importance of belonging. The Youth Social Media Advisor helped create graphics, photographs and podcasts, which were widely shared around the province throughout the year.



## A Focus on Friendship Centres

An RCY priority is to engage with Indigenous children, youth, families, organizations and communities. The goal of RCY's community liaison work is to reach out to First Nations and Indigenous communities and organizations to provide information on RCY and its services and supports and identify possible opportunities for further conversation and reciprocal learning. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions as well as devastating environmental disasters that impacted many communities, through most of the 2021/22 fiscal year, the Outreach and Engagement team took a step back from direct contact and used the opportunity to reassess how it could best engage with and support Indigenous children, youth, families, organizations and communities within its mandate.

In January 2022, the Outreach and Engagement team resumed its community liaison work but with a focus on establishing reciprocal relationships with Friendship Centres that provide support to many Indigenous communities across the province. As mentioned, RCY's refined approach is to reach young people through their existing circles of support. As Friendship Centres are strongly connected to many Indigenous youth in their respective communities, RCY is grateful for the reciprocal relationships that are growing with the Centres.

### Fast Fact

Having supportive adults and relationships appeared to be a protective factor for youth who were about to transition out of care.

**Source:** McCreary Centre Society (2022), *Youth Transitioning Out of Care*

## General Outreach

The Appendix starting on page 121 includes a list of youth and community engagement, outreach and communications activities in which the Representative and her staff participated during 2021/22.

The graphic on page 57 shows the province-wide outreach the Office conducted in 2020/21.



# Outreach and Engagement



# Reviews and Investigations

## Overview

Reviews and investigations are vital to RCY's work. The Reviews and Investigations team has a dual role to review and investigate the stories of individual children, as well as to examine trends and patterns in critical injuries and deaths to identify systems gaps and inform systems change. The way in which we undertake this work has been reviewed and given great care and attention by the team and leadership in the past few years, so that the work is consistent with the Six Rs. Every report that RCY receives concerns a child or youth who is far more than the specific injury or death that is reported. They are young people who have interests, hopes and dreams. They also have issues and challenges that they are trying to navigate and their whole story is important. Given the volume of critical injuries and deaths that the Reviews and Investigations team reviews each month, it is not possible to fully understand each young person's story, and we do not have the opportunity to ask the young person themselves how they make sense of their experience and what they would like the Representative to understand. Moreover, all information available at the initial review stage is provided by public bodies, and is thus filtered through a care providers lens. However, the team ensures that the information that is recorded for each child or youth who has been critically injured or died conveys respect for the child, is trauma-aware and culturally attuned.

Public bodies that provide "reviewable services" are required to report critical injuries and deaths to the Representative if the child or family was receiving services at the time of, or in the year prior, to the injury or death.

Reviewable services include:

- child welfare
- children and youth with special needs
- addiction services for children
- mental health services for children
- youth justice services.

### *Fast Fact*

During the 2021/22 fiscal year, the Reviews and Investigations team completed comprehensive reviews of the deaths of 12 children.

Currently, the public bodies that deliver reviewable services include MCFD and the health authorities. Through MCFD, the Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs) are also required to report injuries and deaths. All injury and death reports received from public bodies are entered into the RCY database. Reports are reviewed to identify whether they meet the statutory mandate of RCY and whether service delivery issues may have been a factor in the death or critical injury.



When there appears to be a strong connection between the services received or not received and the injury or death, RCY may conduct a comprehensive review (see textbox below) of the injury or death. A comprehensive review is an in-depth review and analysis of relevant records associated with a child and their family as well as related legislation, policies and practice guidelines. The comprehensive review enables the Representative to gain a better understanding about the child's circumstances and story including what may have contributed to their critical injury or death. These reviews take between three and 12 months to complete depending on the complexity of the young person's situation and extent of records, and they inform the Representative's decision about whether or not to proceed to investigation.

Only one or two critical injuries or deaths per year will result in a full investigation. When the team conducts a full investigation, the Representative must prepare a public report with recommendations to government focused on preventing similar injuries or deaths in the future.

### A Detailed Look at RCY's Comprehensive Reviews

RCY conducted 12 comprehensive reviews in 2021/22.

Comprehensive reviews assist the Representative in determining whether to undertake a full investigation. If an investigation is not undertaken, the review helps RCY to:

1. learn about the systems of care through a young person's story in order to inform public bodies about both strengths and challenges and to suggest improvements to reviewable services
2. ensure that the young person's story informs RCY's systemic advocacy work, including aggregate reviews and special reports

If a review does not result in a full public investigation, RCY may send a detailed letter disclosing the results of the comprehensive review to the public bodies that provided the services – usually MCFD and/or a health authority. This letter provides details on the life of the child, how their injury occurred, contributing factors, areas of service strength and suggestions for service improvement or learning. Sharing the results of a comprehensive review in a meaningful way can make a significant contribution to the public bodies' process of ongoing quality assurance and help inform improvements to legislation, regulation, policy, service or practice. When systemic issues are identified through the comprehensive review, the young person's story may also be anonymized and included in aggregate reviews or special reports with recommendations to improve the child- and youth-serving system.

#### *Example:*

A comprehensive review was completed for Jeanine, an Indigenous youth who died at the age of 19 from suspected drug poisoning (overdose). Jeanine is remembered as friendly, caring and a "social butterfly" who enjoyed music and cooking. Jeanine was removed from her family



and culture at a young age and experienced considerable trauma. It took many years – and a tremendous amount of effort from her community – for her to be able to reconnect with her Nation and culture. Jeanine struggled with significant depression that contributed to self-harming and suicidality, and she received a variety of services over many years. In adolescence, Jeanine's connection with workers from an ICFSA was a source of social, emotional and cultural support, and was a bright spot in her life. Depression, suicidality and illicit substance use overwhelmed her, however, and she spent considerable time in involuntary psychiatric care. As a result of limited discharge and transitional planning and action, Jeanine was precariously housed and living at a shelter at the time of her death.

This comprehensive review found that the cultural connections and supports facilitated by the ICFSA were very meaningful to Jeanine after a childhood of disconnection from culture and family. The Representative noted how heartbreaking Jeanine's death was for those who cared for and about her in her community.

Several themes for service improvement were also noted including:

- increasing communication between hospital, community mental health and child welfare services, including psychiatric engagement, to support continuity of service and ensure transitions do not disrupt a young person's safety, well-being and healing
- ensuring that youth who are discharged from mental health care in hospitals have a discharge/transition plan including access to stable housing that meets their needs, and that they are not placed in shelters
- ensuring that youth in care who have FASD receive appropriate supports when they age into adulthood, including examining restrictive eligibility criteria that limit access to CLBC services
- ensuring that property guardians or representation agreements are available to support youth to manage their financial and personal affairs, if they require and request this support after they turn 19
- developing legislative and regulatory criteria to ensure that seclusion and restraint of youth in hospitals is used as a last resort and, when used, is carefully monitored.

Jeanine's story was not an outlier. Concerns illuminated through her story show up in many other young peoples' stories, including: cultural disconnection; unaddressed intergenerational trauma; timely access to appropriate mental health and substance use care; use of seclusion and restraints in hospitals; inadequately planned or implemented transitions between hospital, custody and community; use of shelters as post-discharge placements; and inadequacy of supports for youth in transition to adulthood. Post-review letters were provided to all public bodies involved in providing care for Jeanine in hopes that the detailed information will inform legislative, regulatory and policy change as well as processes and practices for similar situations. RCY also intends to draw on the learnings from this comprehensive review in a future special report on system responses to girls with complex lives and needs.





# The Reviews and Investigations Process

## Out-of-Mandate

Report does not meet RCY's Reviews and Investigations mandate; details recorded; no further action.

## Critical Injury or Death Report

Critical injury or death of a child or youth is reported to RCY by a public body.

## Initial Review

Report receives an initial review based on established criteria to determine if critical injury occurred and if reviewable services were provided.

## In-Mandate

Report meets RCY mandate. Additional information gathered and reviewed by Representative and team to determine next steps. Data recorded for aggregation and to analyze trends. Child's story may be considered for comprehensive review.

## Comprehensive Review

Comprehensive review undertaken. Internal review report prepared. Report reviewed by Representative and team to determine if full investigation of child's story is appropriate.

## No Full Investigation

Representative determines that there will not be a full investigation. Comprehensive review findings may contribute to aggregate review or special report. Findings may be reported to involved public bodies.

## Investigation

Representative determines that an investigation is required and a full investigation is undertaken.

## Report with Recommendations

Investigation complete; investigative report prepared and publicly released. Recommendations may be made.



## Reviews and Investigations – Terms

**Aggregate reviews** analyze injuries and deaths with similar characteristics, such as the report that was done by RCY on non-suicidal self-injury, *A Way to Cope*.

**Care status (in care/not in care)** refers to the legal responsibility of the physical care and control of a child. When a child is in care, they are in the legal care of MCFD.

**Critical injury** means an injury to a child that may result in the child's death or cause serious or long-term impairment of the child's health.



*Photo of sunset in Tofino on the traditional territory of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation of the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples, taken by Aaraksh Siwakoti.*



# Highlights of Reviews and Investigations Activities in 2021/22

## Reviews and Investigations Cases and Trends

During 2021/22, Reviews and Investigations received 5,081 reportable circumstances reports for children and youth who received services during the preceding 12 months (over 400 per month, on average). Each of these reports received an initial review and, of these reports, 2,516 – or almost 50 per cent – met the Representative's mandate.<sup>8</sup> Of these, 2,406 were reports of in-mandate critical injuries, and 110 were reports of in-mandate child and youth deaths.

Figure 6 details the number of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services that met the mandate after an initial review for the years 2016/17 to 2021/22.

**Figure 6 – In-Mandate Critical Injuries and Deaths – 2016/17 to 2021/22**

Fiscal Year	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Critical Injuries <sup>9</sup>	754	818	1,061	1,252	1,825	2,406
Deaths	112	118	110	95	95	110
Total	866	936	1,171	1,347	1,920	2,516
Year-to-year increase in total in-mandate critical injuries and deaths	Baseline	8%	25%	15%	43%	31%
Cumulative % increase in total in-mandate critical injuries and deaths over 5 years	Baseline					191%

<sup>8</sup> For an incident to meet the legislative mandate, the following three criteria must be met: 1) the child/youth was critically injured or died; 2) the child/youth was under 19-years-old at the time of the incident and; 3) the child/youth or their family received reviewable services within 12 months of the time of the incident.

<sup>9</sup> The numbers of in-mandate critical injuries for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 are slightly higher here than those reported in previous RCY annual reports because of a recent decision to expand the definition of in-mandate injuries for emotional harm. Emotional harm injuries reported for children from birth to three-years-old who have experienced the loss of a loved one are now considered to be in-mandate rather than out-of-mandate. This change has been implemented retroactively to injury data from 2018/19 on.



## Increase in Reported Critical Injuries and Deaths

- In fiscal year 2021/22, our Office received a record-high 5,081 reportable circumstances reports – 2,516 of which (almost 50 per cent) were determined to be within RCY’s legislative mandate.
- These in-mandate reportables included 2,406 critical injuries and 110 deaths of children and youth – a 31 per cent increase over the previous fiscal year.
- This continued the trend of sharp increases in in-mandate reportables to our Office. In fact, there has been a 191 per cent increase over the past five years.
- The reasons for this dramatic increase are not fully known but may reflect improved reporting by MCFD, and/or the overlapping impacts of the COVID pandemic and opioid crisis/toxic drug supply, mental health-related incidents, increased violence, sexual exploitation and gang-related activities, among others.
- In May 2021, the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority began reporting critical injuries and deaths related to child and youth mental health services to the Representative; this is expected to be followed by child and adolescent mental health hospital services in the coming months, and, possibly after that, substance use services for youth.
- The Representative expects to see further incremental increases in reportables as health authorities begin to report critical injuries and deaths in relation to mental health and eventually addictions services for children and youth, as is required by legislation.

RCY data demonstrate that a high proportion of the in-mandate critical injuries and deaths reported to the Representative in 2021/22 were experienced by Indigenous children and youth (Figure 7).

**Figure 7 – Critical Injuries and Deaths by Indigeneity and Care Status – 2021/22**

	Critical Injuries						Deaths					
	Indigenous					Non-Indigenous	Indigenous					Non-Indigenous
	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Indigenous: Unspecified*	Total Indigenous		First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Indigenous: Unspecified*	Total Indigenous	
In care	794	152	3	2	951	567	5	1	0	0	6	4
Not in care	351	51	3	4	409	479	35	3	1	0	39	61
Subtotal	1145	203	6	6	1360	1046	40	4	1	0	45	65
% of total					57%	43%					41%	59%

\* A child/youth is identified as “Indigenous: Unspecified” when MCFD practitioners are aware that a child is Indigenous but do not know that child’s specific heritage (i.e., whether that child is First Nations, Métis or Inuit). This is usually the case when a child is newly connected to MCFD.

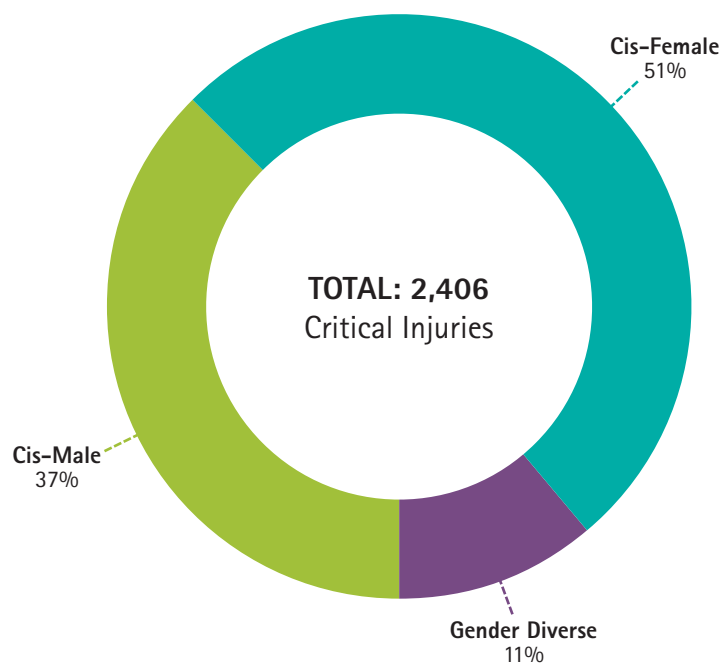


Of the 2,406 in-mandate critical injuries reported to RCY in 2021/22, 1,360 (57 per cent) were experienced by Indigenous children and youth. A total of 951 (40 per cent) of all in-mandate injuries were experienced by Indigenous children and youth in government care. Of the 1,360 injuries experienced by Indigenous children, 1,145 (84 per cent) were experienced by First Nations children and youth, 203 (15 per cent) were experienced by Métis children and youth, six (less than one per cent) were experienced by Inuit children and youth and six (less than one per cent) were experienced by children and youth with no specific information on their Indigenous heritage.

Of the 110 in-mandate deaths reported to RCY in 2021/22, 45 (41 per cent) were Indigenous children or youth; however, only six deaths (five per cent) were Indigenous children or youth in government care. Across all deaths, 40 (36 per cent) were First Nations children or youth, four (four per cent) were Métis children or youth and one (one per cent) was an Inuit child or youth.

Figures 8 to 12 provide more detail on injury classifications and breakdown by gender and age of in-mandate critical injury and death reports received by the Representative in 2021/22.

**Figure 8 – In-Mandate Critical Injuries by Gender – 2021/22**



Of the 2,406 in-mandate injuries reported to the Representative in 2021/22:

- 902 (37 per cent) were experienced by cis-male children and youth
- 1,229 (51 per cent) were experienced by cis-female children and youth
- 275 (11 per cent) were experienced by gender diverse children and youth.

**Fast Fact**

In 2021/22, RCY received 203 substance-related critical injury reports among children and youth. Of these, 123 (61 per cent) were illicit drug overdoses.

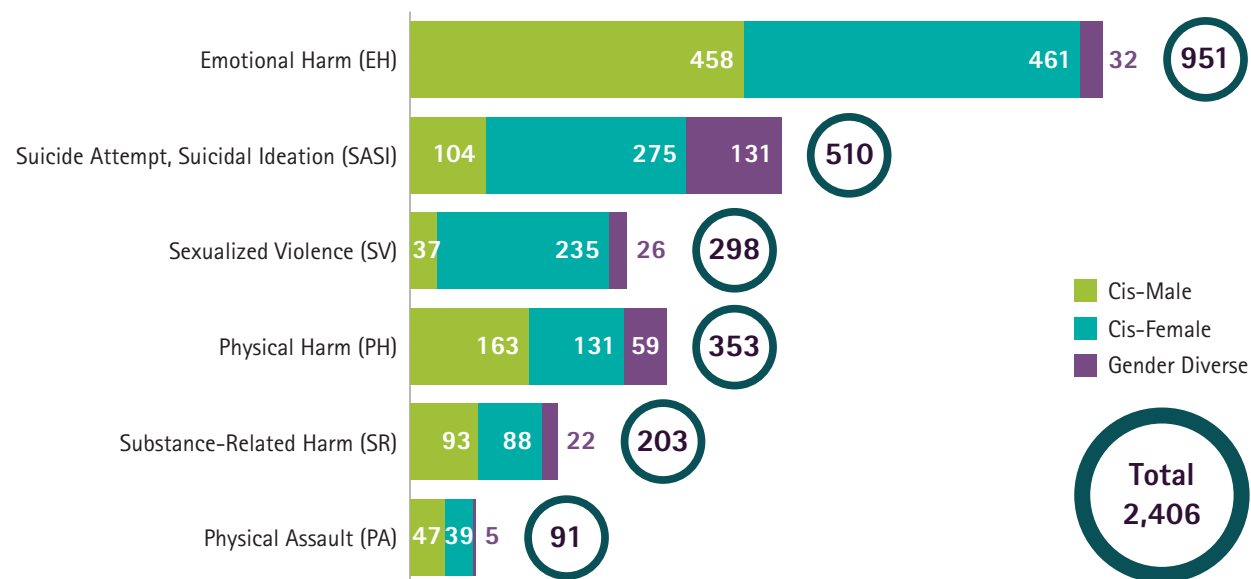
Over half (65) of the illicit overdose injuries were among cis-males (53 per cent), with 42 (34 per cent) experienced by cis-females, and 16 (13 per cent) experienced by gender diverse youth.

The overall number of substance-related injuries RCY is receiving is increasing over time.

**Source:** RCY, Reviews and Investigations



Figure 9 – In-Mandate Critical Injuries by RCY Classification and Gender – 2021/22



Of the 2,406 in-mandate critical injuries reported to the Representative in 2021/22:

- 951 (40 per cent) were emotional harms. These were experienced about equally by cis-male (458 or 48 per cent) and cis-female children and youth (461 or 48 per cent)
- 510 (21 per cent) were suicide attempts or incidents of suicidal ideation. Of these, 275 (54 per cent) were experienced by cis-female children and youth, and 131 (21 per cent) were experienced by gender diverse children and youth
- 353 (15 per cent) were physical harms. Of these, 163 (46 per cent) and 131 (37 per cent) were experienced by cis-male and cis-female children and youth, respectively
- 298 (12 per cent) were incidents of sexualized violence, 235 (79 per cent) of which were experienced by cis-female children and youth
- 203 (eight per cent) were substance-related harms, experienced about equally by cis-male (93 or 46 per cent) and cis-female (88 or 43 per cent) children and youth
- 91 (four per cent) were incidents of physical assault. Of these, 47 (52 per cent) were experienced by cis-males, 39 (43 per cent) were experienced by cis-females and five (five per cent) were gender diverse children and youth.

**Fast Fact**

Of the 951 emotional harm injuries reported to the Representative in 2021/22, 188 (20 per cent) were related to the substance-related death of a parent, primary caregiver or close sibling. This is likely an undercount as the cause of death of a loved one is not always available and the practice of reporting these losses as injuries is still evolving.

**Source:** RCY, Reviews and Investigations



## Injury Classifications

**Emotional harm** injuries are considered in-mandate if there is a potential to cause serious or long-term emotional or psychological harm to the child/youth. This includes caregiver mistreatment, death of a parent or significant caregiver, and clear and direct threats to safety, among others.

**Physical assault** injuries are inflicted by another person and are considered in-mandate if the injury caused more than minor soft tissue damage. This includes significant bruises, gunshot wounds, broken bones, etc.

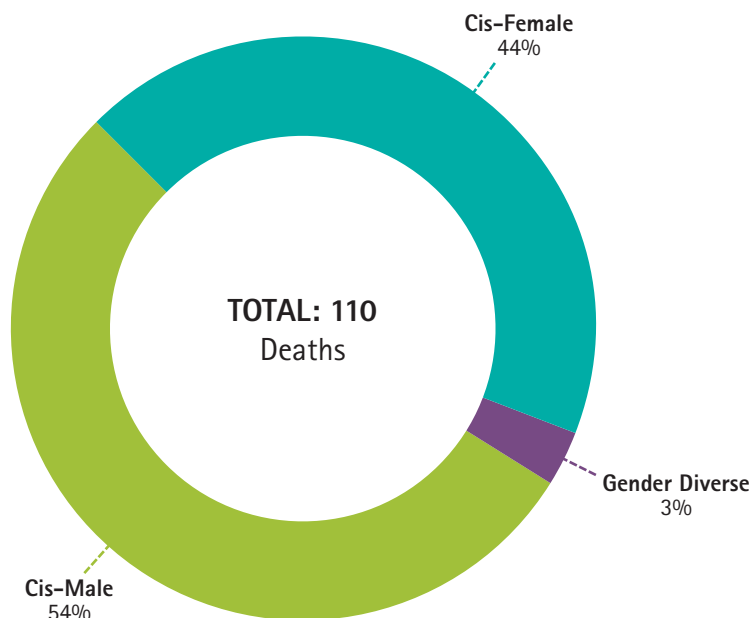
**Physical harm** injuries may be self-inflicted or accidental and are considered in-mandate if the injury caused more than minor soft tissue damage. This includes head injuries, wounds requiring stitching, self-harm, etc.

**Sexualized violence** injuries occur when a sexualized act is committed on a child/youth without their consent.

**Substance-related harm** injuries are considered in-mandate if the substance misuse led to a possible serious injury or death. This includes illicit and prescription drug overdoses and severe alcohol intoxication.

For a **suicide attempt or ideation** to be considered in-mandate, the incident must have led to a critical injury, or have been intended to lead to a possible critical injury or death.

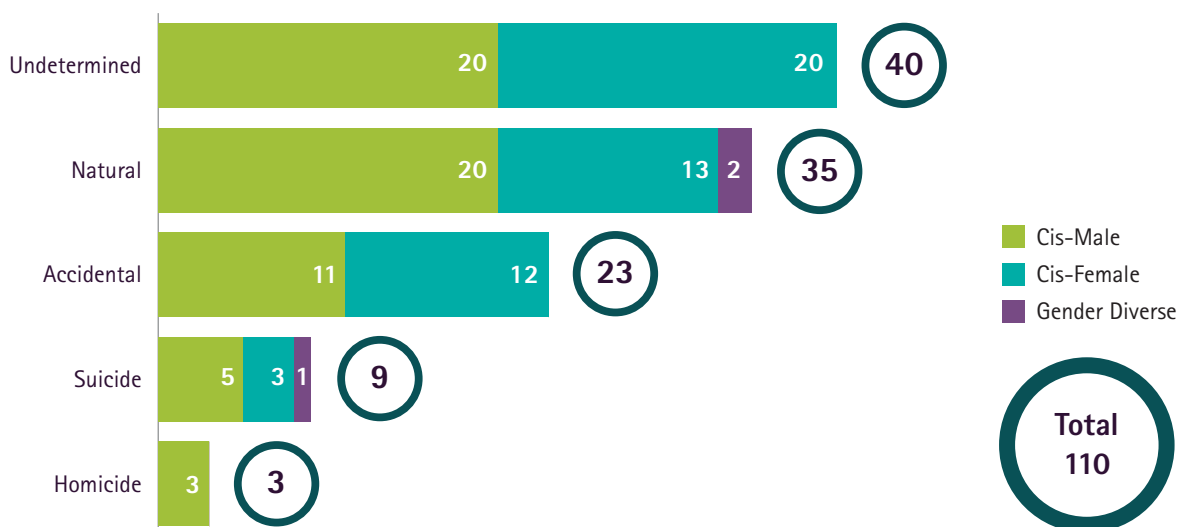
Figure 10 – Percentage of In-Mandate Deaths by Gender – 2021/22



Of the 110 in-mandate deaths reported to the Representative in 2021/22:

- 59 (54 per cent) were cis-male children and youth
- 48 (44 per cent) were cis-female children and youth
- Three (three per cent) were gender diverse children and youth.

**Figure 11 – In-Mandate Deaths by RCY Classification and Gender – 2021/22**



Of the 110 in-mandate deaths reported to the Representative in 2021/22:

- 40 (36 per cent) were undetermined,<sup>10</sup> experienced equally by cis-male and cis-female children and youth
- 35 (32 per cent) were deemed a natural death.<sup>11</sup> Of these, 20 (57 per cent) were among cis-male and 13 (37 per cent) were among cis-female children and youth
- 23 (21 per cent) were accidental, including 11 cis-male and 12 cis-female children and youth
- Nine (eight per cent) resulted from suicide, including five cis-male and three cis-female children and youth
- Three (three per cent) resulted from homicides of cis-male youth.

**Fast Fact**

Of the 110 child and youth deaths reported to the Representative that occurred in 2021/22, nearly one quarter (26, or 23 per cent) were substance-related.

According to the Coroner, some of these deaths resulted from suicide, some were accidental and some were of undetermined cause.

**Source:** RCY, Reviews and Investigations

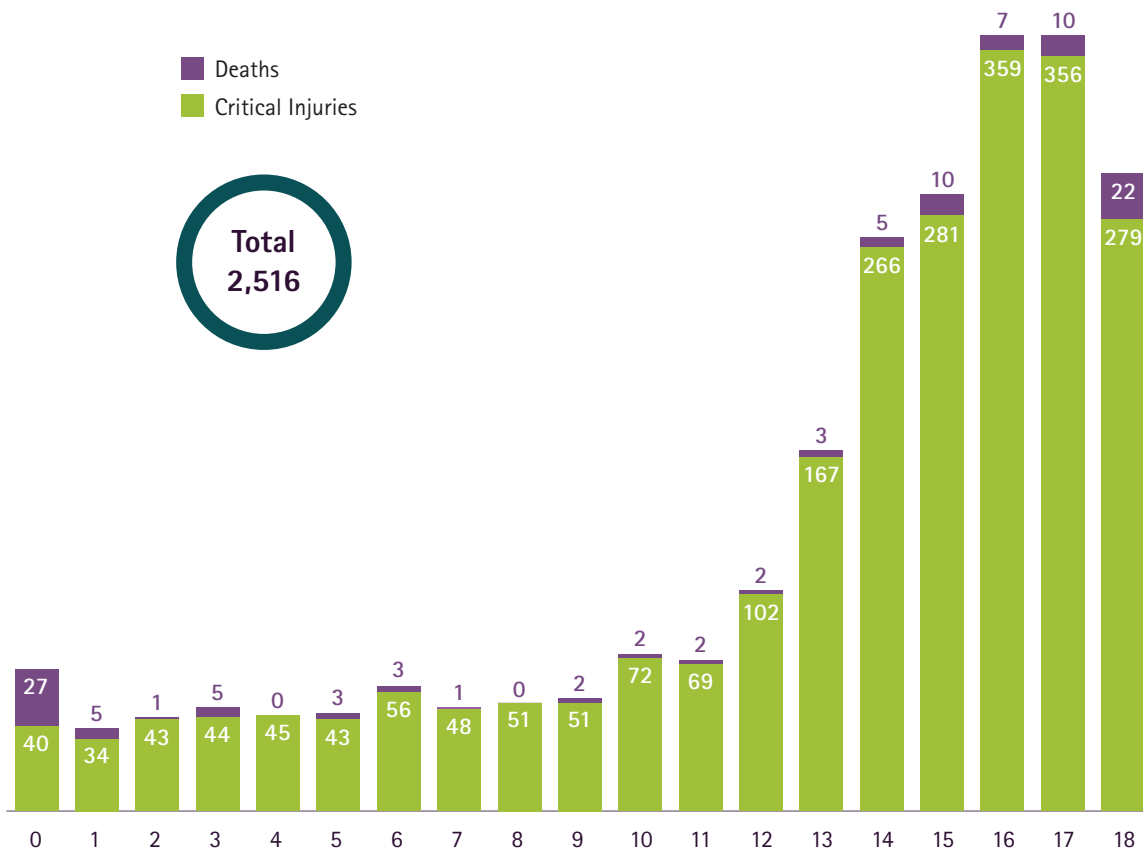
<sup>10</sup> A death is noted as undetermined when the coroner has not determined the cause of death.

<sup>11</sup> A death due to natural causes may result from medical factors such as terminal illness or congenital birth defects.





Figure 12 – Age Distribution of In-Mandate Critical Injuries and Deaths – 2021/22



Of all critical injury and death reports received by the Representative in 2021/22:

- Most were experienced by children and youth ages 12 and older. This age group experienced
  - 74 per cent of total critical injuries and deaths (1,869 of 2,516)
  - 75 per cent of critical injuries (1,810 of 2,406)
  - 54 per cent of deaths (59 of 110)
- The highest number of deaths (27 or 25 per cent) occurred in infants up to one year of age. This is typically due to congenital conditions contributing to health fragility and premature – but often expected – death. Some infant deaths are attributable to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or unsafe sleep environments.
- The second highest number of deaths (22 or 20 per cent) occurred among 18-year-old youth.



## Getting to Know RCY

### Ruby – Reviews and Investigations

#### Why RCY in two sentences?

The theme of advocacy has been woven into many of the roles I have held in my career. I witnessed a lot of moments we don't often get to see, like the love of parents, who, despite it all, continue to seek and love their young ones, and I wanted to honour their resistance by finding a way to address the injustice young people and their families experience at the hands of the system.



#### Who most inspires you, living or dead, and why?

Every day, I am always most inspired by the children, youth, and families I have had the privilege of knowing, and my mentors (you know who you are) who have encouraged me to step into spaces I never before imagined myself showing up.

#### Dog, cat or favourite pet?

I don't have any pets, but I do have many house plants that I love and care for!

#### Best RCY memory?

One of my cherished memories at RCY was creating and facilitating a workshop on belonging for children and youth in care where I had the opportunity to share some of the young peoples' stories that shifted my practice the most.

#### Favourite meal?

Albeit a difficult choice, if iced coffee was a food group, I would pick that. However, my one true love is tacos – always and forever.

#### This is not easy work. What keeps you motivated, especially when the going gets tough?

I have a lot of very important humans in my life whose lives have been touched by systems and I am reminded of the costs that exist when we fail to celebrate their resilience. So, I think of them – and I have many of their pictures on my wall – reminding me why I continue to show up.

#### What's your ideal Sunday?

Sundays for me are: sleeping in, sipping on iced coffee, streaming a series, stepping outside, spending time with loved ones and an abundance of self-care.



**If you could change one thing for young people in B.C., what would it be?**

My wish list is long and I imagine that the youths' lists are even longer, but if I could summarize mine it would be that we enact the changes we need to, so that teams like mine that review the deaths of children and youth don't have to exist anymore – where we no longer lose young ones to violence, systemic inequities, or overdoses but, rather, witness young people fulfill the futures they have rights to.

**What is your life motto or a favourite quote that you live by?**

"No mud, no lotus."

**What does success look like for you?**

Success for me looks like honouring the voices and wishes of our young people in a way that is meaningful and upholds their dignity in the work we set out to do. I think being successful is ensuring that what I am doing reflects youth voice and upholds the commitments I have made to them – I do so by practising as if they are in the room with me always.

## Reviews and Investigations Initiatives

Between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022, the Reviews and Investigations team released one investigative report. *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging* reported on an investigation into the life and death of Skye, a First Nations youth who died from toxic drug poisoning on her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and who had been repeatedly separated from her mother, family, important adults and friends in her life, her culture and community (see report graphic, page 86).

The Reviews and Investigations team also released the *Child Participation in Family Law and Child Welfare Court Proceedings* report, a literature review prepared by the FREDA Centre at Simon Fraser University. The report addresses gaps and barriers in Canada's management of children's legal representation. The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* protects all aspects of a child's life and ensures that they are appropriately protected in economic, political, social and legal environments. Children's entitlement to legal representation and to voice their best interests during court proceedings including, for example, in high-conflict custody cases or situations of domestic violence, form a necessary component of this overarching protection. Canada ratified the *UNCRC* in 1991, and yet many shortcomings remain in B.C.'s and Canada's approaches to children's rights during legal proceedings. This report sets the stage for a forthcoming RCY report examining how children and youths' views are heard and considered in legal proceedings (see below).



During 2021/22, Reviews and Investigations also worked on the following projects:

- building on the *Child Participation in Family Law and Child Welfare Court Proceedings* work described above as well as youth-engaged research undertaken by the social research and design group at InWithForward, the team prepared a report examining how the views of children and youth are currently heard and considered in legal proceedings under B.C.'s *CFCS Act* and the *Family Law Act (FLA)*. This report also builds on the 2020 *Detained* report which explored child and youth participation within the context of involuntary detention under the *Mental Health Act*. Similar to *Detained*, the forthcoming report examines the means by which children and youth are afforded their rights to participate in family justice issues under the *CFCS Act* and the *FLA* and makes recommendations for improvement. Both reports centre the input of young people with lived experience.<sup>12</sup>
- preparation of an aggregate review report about gender diverse children and youth including how they experience services and how services could better support their unique needs. Initial work has involved compiling, analyzing, and presenting RCY data on injuries and deaths experienced by gender diverse children and youth in B.C. who received or are receiving reviewable services. This work is also being supported by the University of B.C.'s Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC), which is providing a literature review, analysis of B.C.-wide survey data, and conducting youth engagement with gender diverse young people in B.C.
- review and analysis of RCY data to support the Representative's Statement and submission to the Select Standing Committee on Health on the toxic drug crisis and its effect on children and youth receiving services in B.C.
- identification of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) among female youth receiving reviewable services as a trend requiring further examination and review. Data gathered from child and youth death and critical injury reports and advocacy files indicated a group of female-identifying youth who have experienced IPV and possible sexual exploitation from older "partners." This type of violence has implications for child-serving systems that are responsible for meeting the complex needs of the young people who are experiencing IPV. In many cases, these youth have been unwilling or unable to seek health care or other support services, to feel safe cooperating with police, or to separate themselves from the violent relationship. The team is partnering with the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) to further explore this topic.

### Fast Fact

Sexual minority youth surveyed ages 12- to 19-years-old were around twice as likely as cis-gender youth to have experienced living in government care (such as a foster home or group home) or an alternative to government care (such as a Youth Agreement).

**Source:** McCreary Centre Society (2022). *Not Yet Equal: The Sequel*.

<sup>12</sup> Representative for Children and Youth, *Detained: Rights of children and youth under the Mental Health Act* (Victoria: Representative for Children and Youth, 2021), [https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RCY\\_Detained-Jan2021.FINAL\\_.pdf](https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RCY_Detained-Jan2021.FINAL_.pdf)



- participation in the Systems Failing Girls project, led by the Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research team. This work is being informed by quantitative data from critical injury and death reviews, the stories of a number of girls as captured in completed comprehensive reviews and the frontline practice expertise of members of the Reviews and Investigations team.
- continued work with representatives from MCFD, the Ministry of Health and B.C.'s health authorities to enable health authorities to report critical injuries and deaths of children who receive mental health services to the Representative. The goal is for health authorities to begin this required reporting in the fall of 2022.

### A New Approach to RCY's Investigative Process

The investigation into the life and death of Skye explored in detail the harmful impacts of the child welfare system on First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families, reflecting a new approach to RCY's investigative process guided by the Six Rs. The investigation was also guided by the foundational principles of cultural safety, restorative approaches and trauma-informed practice and acknowledged the complexity of systems, histories and identities underlying children and youths' stories.

The investigation used multiple data sources including interviews and quantitative data, which allowed the Representative to intentionally weave Indigenous ways of knowing and being into the work. The report tells Skye's story of separation from her family, culture and community, and seeks to understand the systemic changes that are needed to support young people to experience a strong sense of belonging and connection in five key dimensions: relational, cultural, physical, legal and identity. This is of particular importance for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth across the province due to the enduring impact of colonization that contributes to an experience of "unbelonging." Stories shared throughout the investigation illustrate the need for transformative change to improve how children and youth are supported to establish a sense of belonging in all aspects of their lives. When systems such as child welfare, health, education and the youth justice system lack continuity, cohesiveness and connections to culture, they can promote a sense of "unbelonging," which contributes to adverse outcomes for children, especially those in care. Skye's story illustrates the possibility of positively shifting outcomes for children, youth and families when systems shift to responding with acts of belonging.



# Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research

## Overview

The Systemic Advocacy, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Research team is responsible for advocating for long-term changes in policy, practice and legislation that improve the outcomes and well-being of children and youth who access designated services.

Systemic advocacy is a rights-based model of government monitoring. As is true throughout RCY, the team is guided by the *UNCRC*, *UNCRPD* and *UNDRIP* which set out the rights that must be upheld. The Four Ps guide our analysts and researchers to understand how issues such as racism, discrimination, inequities and cultural disconnection create barriers that impact the ability of children and youth to access the care and support they need.

Guided by lived and living experience of young people and their families, the Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research team works to identify common challenges or gaps that systematically infringe on the rights of children, youth and young adults and on the inherent rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Systemic advocacy issues are identified in three key ways:

- through engagement with young people and families, service providers, researchers, First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous partners and leaders, and Members of the Legislative Assembly
- regular review of reportable circumstances and individual advocacy concerns brought forward to the Representative and the systemic patterns and trends that they reveal
- monitoring of the current and possible future states of child and youth needs and services in B.C. and Canada through diverse data sources, research and assessments of progress and impact on past RCY recommendations.

### Fast Fact

Indigenous ways of knowing and being see individuals as having a place and a purpose within their community, as part of the collective circle – a place where they belong, where they will be supported and upheld. When children are adopted or removed from their families in ways that sever parental and extended relationships, they do not just lose those immediate relationships; they also lose an entire collective relationship with their land, their community and ancestors – a place where they have always belonged and will always belong.

**Source:** RCY (2021), *Skye's Legacy* report



Once a possible systemic issue has been identified, our multi-disciplinary team examines the issue and the impact for children and youth through policy and data analysis, two-eyed seeing, research, inquiries and monitoring. Following the review, the team recommends opportunities for systemic advocacy to the Representative which may include:

- engaging: further engagement, particularly with children, youth, families and frontline service providers, may be required to develop a deeper understanding of the issues, needs and options
- sharing: sharing information and data with service providers and decision-makers can inform systems directions and decisions; knowledge mobilization activities help to raise awareness and cultivate collective action
- aligning: RCY's many collaborators and partners are already engaging in systemic advocacy and action and RCY can lend support to – and raise awareness about – the valuable systemic work that is being led by others
- convening: given the complexity of systemic issues, no one organization or ministry can be expected to have all solutions; RCY may serve as host and convenor to bring people and organizations with diverse experiences, perspectives and ideas together to inform systemic action
- assessing: evaluating government's implementation of recommendations from our Office and other relevant bodies facilitates a better understanding of what is working or not working and what is progressing or stalled
- advising and influencing: informing priorities and planning of government and non-government agencies helps to promote improved outcomes for children and youth
- recommending: making recommendations to government for new or improved legislation, policy and/or practice standards may be done through public reports, statements or presentations to legislative committees and policy-makers.



*Collage of images taken at the Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research team retreat at Goldstream Provincial Park on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish peoples.*



## Highlights of Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research Activities in 2021/22

### Report

Between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022, the Systemic Advocacy, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Research team completed the report *Excluded: Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and their Families* (April 2021) which examined the experiences of children with FASD, their families and those who support them, finding significant inequities in services available to these children and a general lack of understanding about this "invisible disorder."

See page 87 for further information on this report.

### Fast Fact

Rather than just preventing children from coming into care, prevention is about ensuring child, family and community wellness so that children can realize their potential and so that families are healthy and nurturing for young people.

**Source:** RCY (2022), *At a Crossroads* report

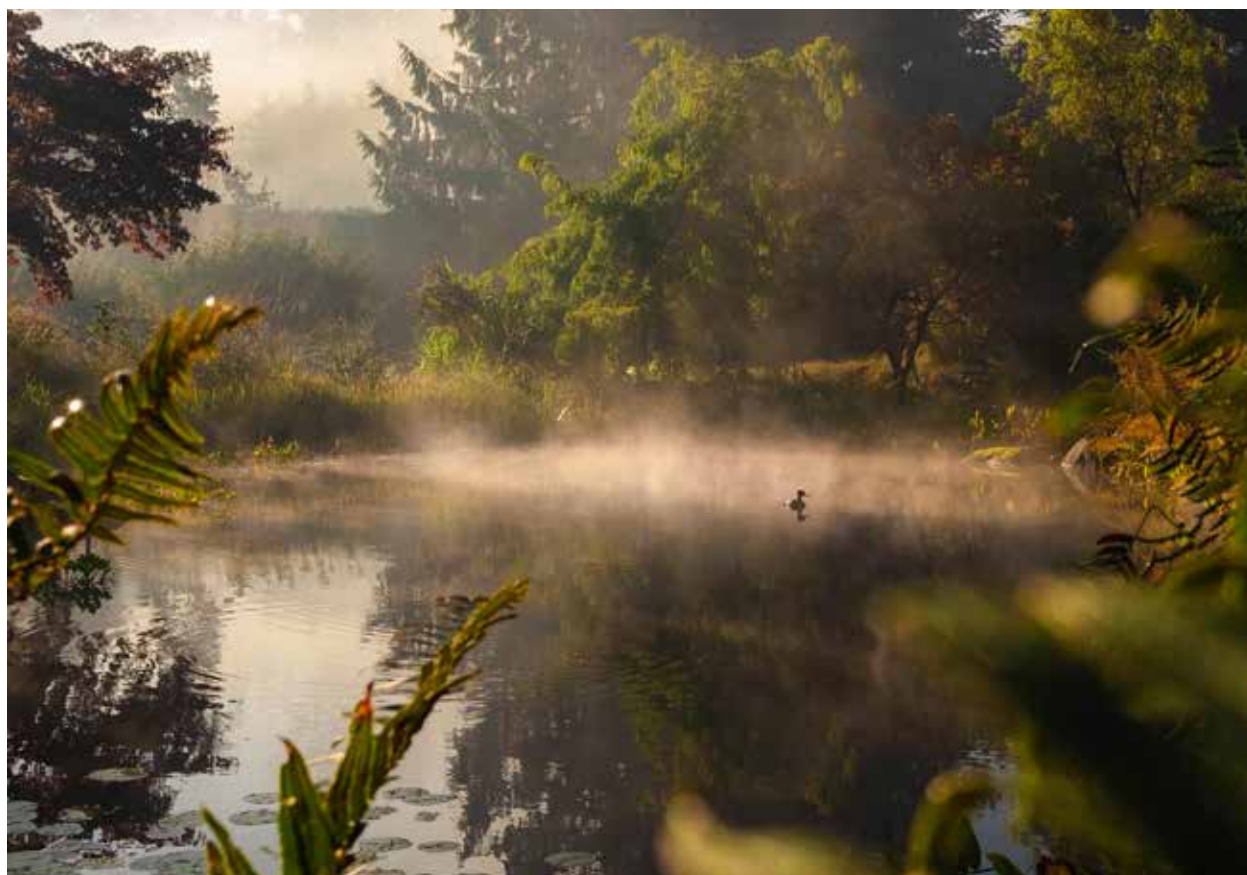


Photo of a pond in Sooke, traditional territory of the T'Sou-ke Nation, taken by Aaraksh Siwakoti.





## Projects and Initiatives

During the 2021/22 fiscal year, the Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research team undertook a number of systems-oriented initiatives to uphold children's rights, enhance inclusion and belonging, and address inequity and inequality. This included:

- Care Plan Review** – the RCY Care Plan group completed a multi-year review of MCFD's care planning process, including a jurisdictional scan, care plan audits, surveys and interviews with youth, caregivers and social workers. In the 2022/23 fiscal year, the Representative will release findings of the research which suggest care planning in B.C. and the current compliance audit methodology does not measure the quality of care children and youth are receiving, nor is it measuring the outcomes of care planning. Research findings also reveal a considerable number of persistent barriers to quality care planning at the organizational and systems levels that have been found in previous Representative's reports and that continue to be of concern. The Representative also notes that MCFD is making some important and timely strides toward outcomes-based measurement, improved care planning with a focus on enhancing belonging, and improved complaints processes that are more accessible and safe for children and youth.
- Keeping Families Safely Together, the Early Years** – the team completed an engagement series with service providers, families and Indigenous leaders involved in the early years sector to explore systemic issues impacting early years care in B.C. In December 2021, RCY convened more than 45 members of the early years community to share what we heard, including a vision of a transformed early years system, and to gather feedback on the key areas of concern, interest and opportunity for future work. The early years work also included preparation of five research reports from early years scholars from several different universities (University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University and University of Northern British Columbia) detailing systemic and service issues related to children in their early years and specifically the importance of keeping families safely together through reducing child maltreatment and the likelihood of protective service interventions, enhancing family development and support, and fostering supportive community around families, especially those who experience vulnerabilities.

### Fast Fact

Research suggests that multiple placements can lead to negative psychological, emotional, social and academic consequences. Children and youth may find it difficult to settle down at school, make new friends or build personal connections with others. They may find it difficult to develop trust and form relationships, decreasing the likelihood of reunification or permanency. Placement instability may also compound existing difficulties that children in care face and exacerbate feelings of anxiety, loss and depression.

**Source:** RCY (2021), *Skye's Legacy* report

### Fast Fact

Mental health challenges, including anxiety, mood disorders and depression, are prevalent among people with FASD.

**Source:** RCY (2021), *Excluded* report



- *Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and their Families Knowledge Mobilization* – the team worked with the Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team to share findings from the *Excluded* report and create resources for policy-makers, service providers and families to raise awareness and understanding about FASD. This included:
  - *Raising FASD Awareness* (January 2022) – A YouTube video featuring FASD expert and *Excluded* co-researcher Myles Himmelreich, created to raise awareness about FASD as a disability that can affect anyone from any culture, society or background as an important step toward removing the shame and stigma faced by children with FASD and their families. Lack of awareness around FASD has harmful effects on the well-being of these children and their families, who have the same rights as all other children and families to the supports and services they need to thrive.

### **Fast Fact**

The evidence is clear, FASD is not a diagnosis that is specific to a particular population or group of people; nor is it necessarily the result of a woman knowingly consuming alcohol while she is pregnant. However, it is often stereotyped as either or both of these and the resulting shame and blame can lead to harmful consequences, including a general lack of empathy and understanding about the disorder and an undeniable lack of supports and services for children and families who clearly need them.

**Source:** RCY (2021), *Excluded* report



*Promotional photo of Myles Himmelreich for RCY's first FASD video.*



- *Hands, not Hurdles: Helping Children with FASD and their Families* is a condensed and easily digestible community-focused version of RCY's *Excluded* report. Guided by an advisory panel that included FASD educators, families, advocates and members with lived experience, the community booklet includes important information about the exclusion, stigma and shame experienced by families caring for children with FASD along with calls for collective action to address the systemic discrimination and inequities identified in the report. With graphic recordings created by Drawing Change, *Hands, not Hurdles* raises awareness and understanding and also supports inclusion and belonging by providing tips and other suggested resources for community practitioners including teachers, counsellors, recreational workers and clinicians. It will be released on Sept. 9, 2022 in recognition of International FASD Awareness Day.
- *Cultural Connections Initial Review* – the team completed a multi-year scoping review of MCFD's cultural connections and Roots program to support the Representative's ongoing advocacy work in cultural belonging. The review found limited investment in the program areas and concerns related to the efficacy of services for Indigenous children and youth reported by Roots practitioners and community partners.
- *Systemic Issues Working Group* – the team continued to explore new ways of identifying, analyzing and reporting on systemic issues identified by our Office by bringing together a cross-organizational team of Advocates, Investigators, Researchers and Communications members to identify and discuss issues. Over the year, the team explored key areas of concern for the Representative including child welfare workforce shortages, inaccessible complex care services and assessment wait times and wait lists.
- *Research Collaborations* – As previously noted, teams across the RCY are engaging with researchers and research institutes in B.C. to tap into additional expertise and perspectives. Over the past three years, RCY has worked with the Children's Health Policy Centre at Simon Fraser University to undertake research reviews on the mental health of children and youth. In 2022/23, RCY will release three collaborative reports on the mental health of children and youth in care, the mental health of neurodiverse children and youth and a follow-up to our 2020 report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child and youth mental health. Two research reviews by university-based experts at Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria have examined the failure of systems to adequately support girls experiencing multiple challenges. These reviews will be integrated into a report planned for 2022/23.



### *Bright Spot*

## **Guiding Lights: Early Years Programs**

The Keeping Families Safely Together engagement process highlighted the important work and role of many individuals and organizations in supporting young children and families. Several organizations assisted RCY in its family engagement sessions. These sessions proved to be hugely enriching to RCY's understanding of the challenges and complex issues impacting service delivery in the early years and their impact on outcomes for children and families.

Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) is a non-profit society with a long and strong history in the metropolitan area. FSGV is led by a volunteer board of directors and executive team that has deep experience in community-building and the social services sector, as well in business, government, law and Indigenous interests. The FSGV Community Education and Development Services team provides supports to families to ensure they feel connected and empowered in all areas of their lives. This includes free programs and workshops in Community Food Skills, Community Connections, Parent Education and Financial Empowerment. RCY's work with FSGV provided us with the opportunity to share stories and learn from newcomer families about their experiences in the early years.

Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia (AHSABC) is a non-profit society made up of the urban Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) sites in B.C., all of which are members of the AHSABC. AHSABC is committed to the development and delivery of quality early childhood programming that nurtures the healthy development and growth of Indigenous children and their families. AHS sites work in collaboration with parents, Elders, program partners and government, sharing the responsibility of growing quality early learning environments for children and families. RCY had a wonderful opportunity to learn from some AHS Regional Coordinators who spoke about their roles and experiences of working with families including what is going well for families, how AHS supports families and also what they see as the biggest challenges to families at this time. The AHS Coordinators had some enriching conversations with RCY about what families and their young ones need to be happy and healthy.

The conversation and stories shared with FSGV, AHSABC and the many other organizations that have supported our work continue to guide the direction of RCY's Keeping Families Safely Together initiative and have provided the team and the organization with an incredible foundation on which to grow this work in 2022/23.



## Systemic Advocacy Trends

A key trend monitored by Systemic Advocacy, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Research is the number of children and youth in care, with a particular focus on the disproportionate representation of Indigenous children and youth.

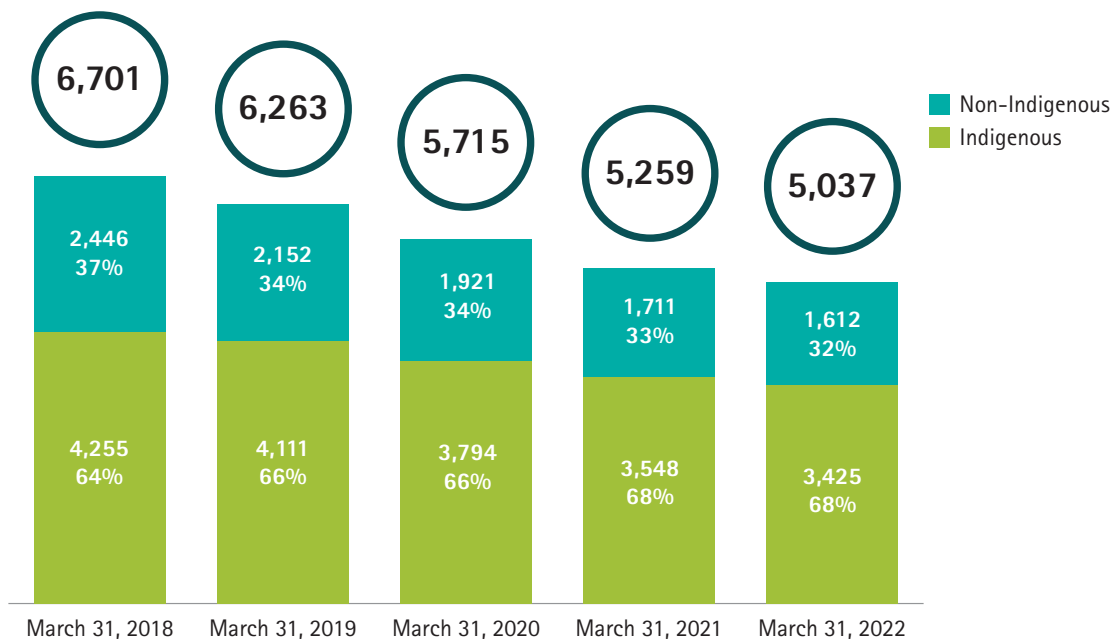
Figure 14 shows the total number and proportion of children and youth in care, and the number and proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth in care for the end of fiscal years 2018 to 2022.

### Fast Fact

In B.C., First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children are more than 18 times more likely to be in care than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

**Source:** RCY (2022), *At a Crossroads* report

**Figure 14 – Number and Proportion of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Children and Youth in Care at Fiscal Year-End (as of March 31), 2018 to 2022**



Note: Some numbers may differ slightly from information included in previous RCY annual reports. The reason for this is twofold: (1) numbers are dynamic and shift over time as information changes in the case management system, and (2) Indigenous counts have been changed to include children and youth not identified as Indigenous in the case management system, but who are cared for by an ICFSA.

Source: MCFD Integrated Case Management System.



Figure 15 is a more detailed breakdown of the number of children and youth in care by their Indigenous status for the end of the fiscal year 2021/22.

**Figure 15 – Number of Children and Youth in Care at Fiscal Year-End by Indigenous Status on March 31, 2022**

Indigenous status	Number of children and youth in care on March 31, 2022
First Nations	2,853
Inuit	30
Métis	463
Nisgaa	48
Non-Indigenous	1,612
Non-Indigenous in ICFSA	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,037</b>

- The number of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care continues to be disproportionate to the number of non-Indigenous children and youth in care. Although First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth represent only about 10 per cent of children and youth between the ages of birth and 19 in B.C., they represent 68 per cent of children and youth in care as of March 31, 2022.<sup>13</sup>
- The proportion of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care has continued to increase from 63.5 per cent on March 31, 2018 to 68 per cent on March 31, 2022.
- Between 2018 and 2022, the total number of children and youth in care at fiscal year-end decreased for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth as well as non-Indigenous children and youth. However, the number of non-Indigenous children and youth in care decreased by 34 per cent over this period, while the number of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care only decreased by 20 per cent.

This over-representation of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care continues to be a key focus of the Representative's Office.

**Fast Fact**

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its *Calls to Action*, which positioned the over-representation of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children in care as the first five of its 94 action items for change.

**Source:** Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), *Calls to Action*

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada, Census 2016 data tables.



## Getting to Know RCY

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



#### Why RCY in two sentences?

It was more about the position than RCY. I felt that I was able to bring some good experience to the position to do good work, whilst also seeing it as an opportunity to grow and develop myself within a very unique and interesting place to work.

#### Who most inspires you, living or dead, and why?

My husband and my daughter. They make me want to be a better person every day.

#### Dog, cat or favourite pet?

Dog – specifically my 12-year-old springer spaniel, Marvin.

#### Best RCY memory?

Having the opportunity to share food and stories in a park in Richmond last summer with families and their children for one of our projects.

#### This is not easy work. What keeps you motivated, especially when the going gets tough?

I will always stay motivated to do the work because RCY has trusted me and employed me to do this work. I have made a commitment to do this work even if the going gets tough and I will always stand by that commitment and the trust that has been shown in me.

#### What's your ideal Sunday?

Hiking day or beach day somewhere out on the west coast with my family.

#### If you could change one thing for young people in B.C., what would it be?

I don't think I have been in B.C. (or Canada) long enough to answer what the "one thing" would be, but I have a passion about education and curiosity and I think (from my UK and B.C. experience) there is a lot of work to be done around education for our children, youth and also for adults.

#### What does success look like for you?

Hard work and happiness.



## Communications and Knowledge Mobilization

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

### Knowledge Mobilization

In 2021/22, the mandate of the Communications team expanded to include knowledge mobilization. Knowledge mobilization refers to a wide range of activities that the Office, led by the Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team, undertakes to disseminate the results of specific RCY work and research, including engagement with young people, government members and ministry staff, community partners, the media and members of the public. This includes production of videos, web pages, webinars, speaking notes, visual presentations, statements, social media, infographics and public outreach events.

The intention of the Representative's knowledge mobilization initiative is to extend the reach of the Office's work beyond the production and release of a report or single initiative in order to continue positive systemic change for the children, youth and young adults of B.C. Early knowledge mobilization efforts by RCY have centred around amplifying the importance of belonging in the lives of children and youth and fostering a greater understanding of children and youth with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

A key function of the Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team is to help build awareness about the work of the Office throughout B.C. This includes responding to requests from journalists and organizing report releases and media events. The team keeps the RCY Executive informed about current topics and concerns in the media and government, and provides strategic advice to the Representative and Executive on communications-related matters.

The Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team is involved in the development of reports from the initial planning stages through to the development of recommendations, design, graphics and the post-release process, as well as writing and reviewing all public and background materials and organizing special events such as open houses that take place around the province.

The Representative is committed to speaking up in support of children and youth and receives many invitations each year to speak at functions and engagements. The Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team supports these activities by preparing speeches, visual presentations and background materials. In 2021/22, the Representative spoke at 32 events.





Communications and Knowledge Mobilization staff also prepare materials for the Representative's appearances before government committees, including the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth and the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. During fiscal 2021/22, the Representative made presentations to these committees seven times.

As part of the Representative's commitment to building awareness about the work of the Office, especially among young people, the Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team maintains a social media presence on six social media accounts. The team also maintains the RCY website, which, in 2021/22, received over four million hits.

The Communications and Knowledge Mobilization team leads video production for the Representative and, in 2021/22, produced a video about FASD as well as three video statements and two youth-friendly claymation videos describing RCY's Advocacy process. More videos are planned for 2022/23.

Internally, Communications and Knowledge Mobilization keeps RCY staff throughout the province informed of key decisions and activities through a weekly staff newsletter, the *RCY Update*, and, in between issues, keeps staff informed of any internal Office developments.

Communications and Knowledge Mobilization is also responsible for organizing staff awareness days, such as Pink Shirt Day and Orange Shirt Day.



*In recognition of Pink Shirt Day, some of our furry friends showed their support as well.*



# Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging

JUNE 2021

This report examined the life and death of Skye, a First Nations youth who died as a result of toxic drug poisoning on her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. She was separated from her mother when she was five-years-old and experienced repeated disconnections from family, significant caregivers, school, culture and community during her many years in care. The report illustrates just how critical it is for children in government care to feel belonging and connection to family, culture, community and identity. Three recommendations were made to government.



### A Key Recommendation

Ministry of Children and Family Development to distribute *Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging* to all staff who work with and plan for children and youth who are in care or who may come into care, and then meaningfully engage in discussions, informed by the Circle practices developed in the *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework*, with those staff about belonging for children and youth in the context of case planning, decision-making and the development and implementation of care plans.

### Theme

*Belonging*: belonging is a fundamental and necessary human experience. Through belonging to family, community, place, school and culture, young people come to discover themselves, their place in the world and their interconnectedness with others. Through belonging, young people develop mastery, generosity and independence.



# Excluded: Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and their Families

APRIL 2021

This report examined the lived experiences of children and youth with FASD and their families through the telling of their own stories. The report revealed significant inequities and inadequacies in services available to children with FASD, and a widespread lack of understanding about this “invisible disability” that contributes to harmful stigma, shame and blame. It also examined the structural racism that appears to skew the referral process for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children toward an assessment for FASD rather than other disabilities. Eleven recommendations were made to government.



## A Key Recommendation

Ministry of Health to take steps to examine systemic bias with regard to referral pathways for FASD and other assessments and to reduce wait times for assessments at B.C.'s complex developmental behavioural conditions (CDBC) diagnostic clinics.

## Theme

**Equity:** While equality is about everyone having the same access to the same thing, equity is about recognizing that some people – because of disadvantage, disability and harms they have experienced – will need more supports and services in order to have the same opportunities as others to thrive and experience belonging in family, school, community and workplaces. People with FASD have long been treated inequitably, but if given equitable access to timely, inclusive, culturally-attuned and non-stigmatizing supports and services, they will thrive.



# At a Crossroads: The roadmap from fiscal discrimination to equity in Indigenous child welfare

MARCH 2022

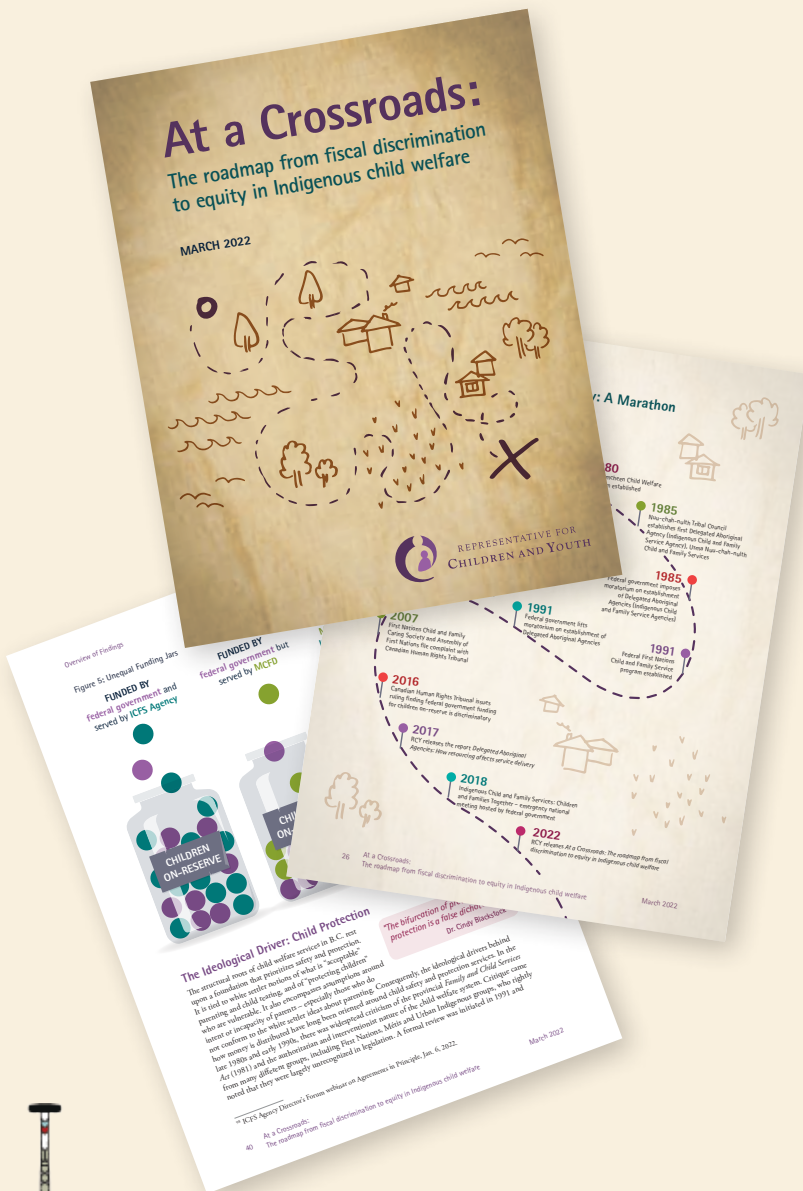
This report sought to map the fiscal ecosystem of child welfare funding and service delivery in B.C. and highlighted funding practices by MCFD that, at the federal level, have already been deemed discriminatory through a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling. It also pointed out the need for the ministry to update its fiscal management system so that public funds allocated to First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous child welfare can be aligned with stated spending objectives and declared government and ministry priorities regarding reconciliation. Three recommendations were made to government.

## A Key Recommendation

Ministry of Children and Family Development to adopt the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal principles of funding and provide funding models that are culturally based and needs-based, that provide for substantive equality for all First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, and that prioritize culturally based community wellness and prevention services.

## Theme

**Jurisdiction:** Indigenous Nations and communities are working directly and collectively with provincial and federal governments through a range of processes to assert their inherent right to have jurisdiction in relation to child and family services. Informed by the purpose and principles laid out in the federal *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and *B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and action plan, self-determination and jurisdiction over child and family services will be uniquely expressed by each Nation and community.



# Year In Review



**13**

Statements

**1,795**

Advocacy calls

**17**

Report  
recommendations

**77**

Media  
requests

**32**

Speeches

**5,081**

Injury and death  
reports received

**7**

Appearances  
before  
Legislature  
Committees

**11**

Videos  
released

**226\***

Youth and young  
adults engaged with

**4**

Reports

**4,192,716**

Website hits

**94**

Advocacy  
outreach events

\*This number was impacted  
by the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Looking Ahead



The following section outlines the goals and activities/actions that are either underway or planned in 2022/23 and planned for the 2023/24 through 2024/25 period. The goals and activities presented below align with the Paddling Forward strategy. This section begins with a focus on the enabling mechanisms that are articulated in the strategy. These are represented as our canoes, paddlers, paddles and supplies and address the structures, resources, processes and tools that are necessary for RCY to successfully meet its mandate. Goals and actions are presented in each area. Thereafter, goals and actions that align with the strategic priorities that were described earlier in the *Annual Report and Service Plan* are presented.

## Implementing RCY's Strategic Direction

### Paddling Forward Strategy: Priorities, Goals and Actions

The Paddling Forward strategy articulates the commitments, priorities and goals of RCY and serves as the foundation for a structured – and at the same time emergent – planning approach for the Office.

To support implementation of Paddling Forward, detailed operational work plans are developed by each RCY team – collectively referred to as the RCY Operational Plan – with activities/actions and responsibilities identified.

Over the next year, RCY's Paddling Forward strategy will continue to be strengthened and refined. RCY will continue to grow and strengthen its organization – our canoes – and enhance our capacity and approach to doing our work – our paddlers, paddles and supplies – as this is what drives our ability to do meaningful work and to have a positive impact. The strategy is also emergent and adaptive with commitments, priorities and activities reviewed by the Executive team quarterly and subject to revision in response to new developments and emerging issues. As new issues emerge, the RCY Executive team will determine how best to address them and may modify commitments and activities. These will be integrated into operational work plans.



## Our Canoes

### Our Touchstones

Over the next three years, RCY will continue to develop its understanding of the three overarching themes – or touchstones – for our work and to increase the understanding and uptake of these in the policy and practice of key ministries. These three touchstones are belonging, equity and jurisdiction and serve as evaluative criteria for our work. In other words, how does the work of RCY enhance young peoples' sense of belonging and connection to people, place, community and a positive identity; promote equity so that all children receive the services and supports that they need to thrive; and support First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities who are asserting jurisdiction over child welfare?

### Our Commitment to Six Rs and Four Ps

The Six Rs and Four Ps previously described will continue to provide foundational and ongoing guidance across RCY. In the 2022/23 year, RCY will continue its ongoing process of understanding how the Six Rs and Four Ps can be applied and put into practice.

**GOAL:** RCY will enhance its understanding and representation of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous worldviews, cultures, customs and the effects of colonial practices.

**ACTIONS:** Priority actions include:

- engage in a process of reconciliation with the Nations on whose territories RCY offices are located
- incorporate Indigenist research methodologies into RCY's research and reviews
- build individual and organizational capacity within all program areas of RCY to work with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families in ways that are respectful and informed by Indigenous worldviews
- ensure, where applicable, that the contemporary circumstances of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families – and services to those populations – are appropriately contextualized in RCY reports and communications within the legacy of colonial and systemic racist policies and practices.





## Our Organization – Structure and Processes

Continuous improvement is an important value for the Representative and the Office. Our commitment to complexity thinking requires that we engage in ongoing learning and adaptation as new information emerges. RCY has a number of goals and is undertaking a range of actions that are focused on ongoing improvement of internal operations as described below.

**GOAL:** RCY will refine its organizational structure and processes to strategically allocate resources for greater impact and to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

**ACTIONS:** In 2021/22, RCY made significant adaptations to our organizational structure and processes, which the Office will build upon in the coming years, including:

- extend the reach and impact of RCY research and reports by continuing to develop and apply targeted knowledge mobilization strategies and activities for key RCY projects. In 2022/23, this will include knowledge mobilization on belonging, FASD, gender diversity and the impact of the toxic drug supply on children, youth and young adults
- continue to work with RCY's Knowledge Keeper to thoughtfully engage Elders and Matriarchs who will provide advice and guidance on all aspects of RCY's work; establish an Elders and Matriarchs Advisory Circle
- recruit a youth and community engagement coordinator
- recruit in-house legal counsel to complement specialized expertise provided by external counsel.



*Ceremonial drummer and dancers during the CCCYA meetings held at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre in Whitehorse – the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.*



**GOAL:** RCY will continue to apply lessons learned from pandemic-related workplace adjustments, staff feedback and research on promising practices for remote work to enhance the work environment and experience for staff.

**ACTIONS:** RCY is committed to remote work and decentralization on an ongoing basis and is adapting policies and practices to support this. Our actions aim to: support staff well-being and retention; enhance efficiency, flexibility and convenience; promote a sense of community; encourage cross-team collaboration and creativity; support staff in staying productive and connected; and enhance accessibility for and connections with young people and community through creative use of space. The following will be initiated in 2022/23:

- modify RCY office spaces to create accessible and welcoming reception areas, hot desks, collaborative team workspaces, cultural and wellness spaces and spaces for community and staff gatherings. This will allow staff to access RCY office spaces as needed even when they are primarily working remotely
- establish an Accessibility Committee in fall 2022 – a full year ahead of when required under the *Accessible BC Act and Regulations* – to guide RCY’s actions toward a more accessible and inclusive work environment
- assess and adapt flexible work options for staff to incorporate feedback and promising practice research
- convene at least two, two-day in-person all-staff gatherings per year to welcome new staff, engage in collaborative project work and provide learning and professional development opportunities
- convene at least one, day-long, virtual all-staff gathering per year to welcome new staff, strengthen a sense of RCY community and provide learning and professional development opportunities.

**GOAL:** RCY will improve corporate services to better meet the evolving demands and needs in both RCY and the BCOHRC.

**ACTIONS:** Building on the findings of the comprehensive corporate services review that was completed in 2021/22, RCY will:

- refresh the shared services agreement to ensure efficient and effective services to both RCY and the BCOHRC and address the following:
  - adjust staffing levels to align with industry standards (RCY corporate services has been under-invested in for a number of years)
  - define the scope and specific intention of each component of the agreement
  - adopt strong practices in corporate service delivery.



**GOAL:** RCY will improve administrative services to better meet the evolving demands and needs of the organization.

**ACTIONS:** Building on the findings of the comprehensive administrative services review that was completed in 2021/22, RCY will:

- restructure project coordination staffing and functions to ensure all teams are supported with project coordination and management expertise
- restructure administrative services to ensure administrative staff are well supervised and supported; workload is equitably distributed; every team has access to administrative support; senior leadership has dedicated and highly experienced executive coordination and administrative support; and each office has on-site administrative support.

**GOAL:** RCY will ensure that the financial resources provided to the organization are used appropriately, efficiently and effectively to fulfill RCY's mandate.

**ACTIONS:** Implementation of the Representative's Paddling Forward strategy necessitates changes to the way the Office does its work and this requires adjustment and realignment of RCY's budget. In 2022/23, RCY will:

- complete a comprehensive review of its budget with the objectives of ensuring alignment and allocation of sufficient resources to strategic priorities and the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of resources to ensure that RCY is having the greatest impact and effect on the lives of children and youth.





*Deputy Representatives Pippa and Sam at the National Indigenous Peoples' Day event in Victoria on the traditional lands of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lekwungen (Songhees) First Nations.*

## Our Paddlers

RCY staff are the organization's greatest strength and their skills, abilities and knowledge are key to the Office's achievement of its commitments, priorities and goals. In light of the significant labour and skills shortages that are affecting recruitment and retention efforts in all sectors, RCY is bringing even more care and attention to both recruitment and retention in the coming years.

**GOAL:** RCY will continue to develop policies, practices and procedures to attract, recruit and retain a diverse, skilled and knowledgeable workforce.

**ACTIONS:** To achieve its commitment to foster and maintain a working environment that is welcoming and supportive to everyone including First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Urban Indigenous and racialized staff and people served, RCY is implementing a range of actions, aligned with the Public Service Agency Diversity and Action Plan, including:

- seek an extension to the Human Rights Tribunal exemption granted in 2018 to enable RCY to continue the practice of restricting hiring for some positions to Indigenous applicants only
- implement the use of preference statements to support recruitment of staff from diverse equity-seeking groups
- continue to provide training and development in accordance with the Four Ps to foster a culturally safer, anti-racist, restorative and trauma-aware organization that is experienced by all staff as welcoming, inclusive and supportive.



**GOAL:** Recognizing the challenging work that RCY staff do on behalf of children, youth, families and young adults, RCY will promote staff well-being and wellness to reduce emotional pain, fatigue, and burnout and support retention and a sense of connection to and purpose in the work.

**ACTIONS:** Staff well-being must be fostered in a variety of ways, including policy and procedural changes that underpin staff experiences of the organization and relational practices and supports that address individual needs. In light of the increasingly challenging labour market, RCY must stand apart in the comprehensiveness and quality of its work in this area. In the coming year, RCY will:

- complete the review and revision of all HR policies to better align with the Six Rs and Four Ps, *DRIPA* and RCY's commitment to decolonize policies and procedures wherever possible
- expand the options available to staff for timely support and counselling, including group or team counselling and cultural supports
- develop and initiate an in-house management and leadership development program for RCY managers to build skills and capacity to practice the Six Rs and Four Ps; support staff well-being and professional development; address performance concerns; lead collaborative projects; and understand strategic contexts and change management.

**GOAL:** RCY will continue to deliver organization-wide training in support of the Four Ps.

**ACTIONS:**

- continue to deliver and integrate training on cultural safety and anti-racism, trauma-awareness and restorative approaches to resolving conflict
- ensure that new staff are provided with opportunities to access Four Ps training opportunities and resources previously provided to staff so that no new staff are left behind in their knowledge and understanding of the Four Ps
- provide learning and professional development opportunities to build staff capacity to work in complexity, use systems thinking approaches and apply developmental design and evaluation techniques.



## Our Paddles

### How We Work – Relational Practice

Relationships lie at the core of everything we do at RCY. Relationships with young people, families, caregivers, service providers, advocacy organizations, Elders and Matriarchs, researchers, leaders and colleagues throughout B.C. and Canada enhance RCY's understanding of the issues and concerns, raise awareness about strengths and bright spots, and inspire creative and promising solutions to complex challenges.

**GOAL:** RCY will continue to promote and embed the Six Rs and relational approaches to our work.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- establish and sustain regular connections with First Nation, Métis and Urban Indigenous partners and ensure that RCY is being responsive to their requests for RCY support, information or advocacy
- build and extend relationships with Elders, Matriarchs, Knowledge Keepers and community advisors throughout B.C.
- connect and collaborate with B.C. and Canadian researchers to prepare in-depth reviews on priority issues.

### **Accountability:**

Efforts will be made to increase the accountability and impact of the Office through a variety of means. The aims of this work are to:

- encourage and catalyze more timely and significant fulfillment of government's commitments to improving reviewable and designated services
- encourage and catalyze the implementation of a balanced approach to systems change that includes highlighting and promoting existing system strengths and promising practices, while pointing out areas of fragmentation and challenge.



**GOAL:** RCY will amend the system for monitoring, assessing and reporting out on government's progress in implementing recommendations from previous RCY reports.

**ACTIONS:**

- research and document promising practices for monitoring, assessing and reporting out on compliance with recommendations made to public bodies
- identify and assess feasibility of strategies for obtaining information from young people about the impact of selected recommendations made by RCY on their experiences of the systems of care (i.e., determine if and how anything has changed for children and youth as a result of RCY's work and recommendations and government's subsequent actions)
- present and discuss options with the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth and public bodies that receive recommendations from RCY
- develop, implement, evaluate and refine a new model to monitor, assess and report out on government's progress on recommendations made by RCY.

**GOAL:** RCY will prepare a series of accountability reports over the next three years to assess progress, impact and outcomes of RCY's past reports and recommendations.

**ACTIONS:** The reports will draw together evidence about actions taken (or not) toward RCY recommendations made in key priority areas over the last three to five years. As this is a new approach for RCY, we will pilot it for CYSN and then modify based on experience and assessment of impact. First activities include:

- develop a template for accountability reports and determine skills, knowledge and resources that will be required to complete an accountability report
- prepare an accountability report for CYSN and document progress on the following RCY reports: *Alone and Afraid, Left Out and Excluded*.

## Data strategies

**GOAL:** RCY will focus on improving RCY's collection and use of quantitative and qualitative data from all program areas to better enable the identification of systemic issues and to better inform current and future priority initiatives.

**ACTIONS:**

- establish a new RCY data strategy, including making better use of both internal and external data sets to understand systemic issues and shifts
- review and revise RCY measurements of its own performance for consideration by the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth.



## Our Paddles: Key Strategic Priorities

All of the above goals and actions establish the conditions for RCY to successfully meet its primary objective which is to help improve services and supports for children, youth and young adults, especially those who are receiving or eligible for reviewable or designated services.

The Representative's renewed set of strategic priorities and goals drives the investment of time and resources for both RCY's core work and its investigations and special reviews and reports.

**PRIORITY:** Services and supports for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and families

**GOAL:** RCY will support the assertion of child welfare jurisdiction by First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities while concurrently influencing systemic change to improve services to Indigenous children in care.

### **ACTIONS:**

- complete and initiate work on agreements or protocols with First Nations, Métis and Urban Indigenous communities and organizations
- seek an amendment to RCY's legislation to enable RCY to provide advocacy, investigative services, training or coaching to Indigenous Governing Bodies at their discretion and request
- continue to advocate for implementation of the recommendations in the *At a Crossroads* report, ensuring changes to provincial and federal funding of Indigenous child welfare to address persistent gaps and inequities
- continue to advocate for collaborative work between ICFSAs and MCFD with respect to the mental health of Indigenous children and youth.





**PRIORITY:** Child and youth substance use and the toxic drug supply

**GOAL:** RCY will continue to advocate for a robust and effective array of voluntary services and supports including harm reduction and treatment options for children and youth and supports for families.

**ACTIONS:**

- document and report out on the impact of the toxic drug crisis on children and youth
- collaborate with the Chief Coroner, Provincial Health Officer, service providers, young people and advocates to raise awareness and understanding about the toxic drug supply and its impact on young people
- initiate a research project on the impact of the toxic drug crisis on youth and on effective harm reduction approaches in partnership with the Canadian Institute on Substance Use Research
- prepare a substance use accountability report to assess progress on recommendations previously made by the Representative
- undertake research to better understand the impact of loss and grief on children and youth, particularly in relation to the toxic drug supply – in partnership with researchers at University of British Columbia-Okanagan.



**PRIORITY:** Child and youth mental health

**GOAL:** RCY will assess COVID-19's persistent negative impacts on mental health and advocate for enhancements to B.C.'s voluntary system of mental health care.

**ACTIONS:**

- prepare a series of public reports on child and youth mental health, in collaboration with research bodies such as the Children's Health Policy Centre at Simon Fraser University, to raise awareness and make recommendations to improve mental health services. Reports will focus on:
  - mental health concerns and disorders amongst children and youth in care and evidence-informed prevention and intervention strategies
  - mental health concerns and disorders amongst children and youth with support needs and evidence-informed prevention and intervention strategies
  - mental health concerns and disorders experienced by Indigenous youth and culturally attuned, trauma-aware prevention and intervention strategies
- prepare follow-up report on COVID-19 impacts on child and youth mental health
- prepare child and youth mental health accountability report
- prepare a report on gender diversity and the experiences and needs of and services for gender-minority youth, in collaboration with Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre at the University of British Columbia
- prepare a special report(s) on the lives of girls who are experiencing complex and interconnected challenges that may include substance use, mental illness, homelessness and intimate partner violence, and collaborate with research institutes/universities on specific topics.



**PRIORITY:** Children and youth with support needs and those experiencing multiple, complex challenges

**GOAL:** RCY will encourage a comprehensive policy and program/service transformation that addresses, in both the short- and long-term, the needs of all children and youth with special support needs.

**ACTIONS:**

- prepare a CYSN accountability report that monitors, assesses and reports out on government's implementation of recommendations in the *Alone and Afraid*, *Left Out* and *Excluded* reports
- prepare a special report on the mental health needs of children and youth with support needs, in collaboration with the Children's Health Policy Centre at Simon Fraser University
- review the proposed CYSN Framework and provide timely feedback and advice to MCFD to address concerns respecting evidence base, financial model, staffing model, evaluation criteria, access, transitions and communications
- engage family members, service providers, advocacy organizations, researchers, First Nations, Métis and Urban Indigenous leaders and policy-makers to better understand the concerns and strategies to support whole system transformation for CYSN services, while supporting children and families in transition.

**PRIORITY:** Supporting families to nurture their children and youth as a critical prevention strategy

**GOAL:** Identify and advocate for early supports and interventions that help to foster the healthy development of children and keep more families safely together; increase provincial attention to – and investment in – policies, programs and services that better assist families to raise their children.

**ACTIONS:**

- prepare a summary report of research briefs that are part of the Keeping Families Safely Together initiative that enhances understanding of systemic and service issues related to children in their early years
- prepare a report summarizing what RCY learned from engagement with a wide range of partners in the early years, focusing on the importance of keeping children and families safely together as a critical component of a prevention and early intervention strategy.



**PRIORITY:** Residential services for children in care

**GOAL:** For those children and youth who cannot live in a family home, RCY will advocate for improvements and work toward a residential system in B.C. that supports connection and belonging rather than adding to the trauma young people have already experienced. The focus will be on residential services for children and youth, including those with complex needs, and particularly an increase in the quality of these services.

**ACTIONS:**

- prepare niche reports or position statements on selected issues which may include access to appropriate placements; use of seclusion and restraint; planned transitions between hospital, custody and community placements; capacity and quality of caregivers and harms experienced by children in residential care; critical injuries experienced by youth who do not have secure placements; placement of young children with complex needs in staffed residential care
- monitor design and implementation of MCFD's proposed residential services framework and provide timely feedback on identified issues and concerns.

**PRIORITY:** Transitioning to adulthood

**GOAL:** RCY will continue to advocate for an improved array of transitional support services for young adults who have left care to ensure that these are comprehensive, youth-focused and support successful transition for young people who are without family privilege.

**ACTIONS:**

- expand awareness among young adults 19- to 27-years-old of the services and supports available to them (as per February 2022 change to the *RCY Act*)
- prepare youth transitions accountability report
- partner with McCreary Centre Society on production of three research reports.



**PRIORITY:** Child rights, voice and representation

**GOAL:** RCY will continue to lift up the rights of children and youth to have their voices heard and considered in the key decisions that are being made about their lives, particularly in legal matters under the *Mental Health Act*; *Child, Family and Community Service Act*; and the *Family Law Act*.

**ACTIONS:**

- seek amendments to the *RCY Act* to reference the *UNCRC*, *UNCRPD* and *UNDRIP* to more clearly embed RCY's responsibility and reference points for upholding children's rights
- develop and implement a comprehensive youth and community engagement strategy that supports the engagement of children, youth, young adults and communities across all areas of work
- ensure that the rights of children, youth and young adults consistently inform the planning, conduct and content of RCY investigations and aggregate reviews, monitoring and special reports including consideration of the views of children, youth and/or young adults with lived experience in the planning and development of every project or report
- complete and release a report on child participation and the inclusion of the voices of youth, including through legal representation, in child protection and high-conflict family law cases
- in partnership with the Society for Children and Youth of BC, prepare five topic-specific research briefs concerning different aspects of child and youth capacity and consent
- continue to employ and support the youth to provide advice on how best to use social media to support youth outreach efforts and create original content for sharing via the Representative's social media accounts.



## Review of the *RCY Act*

Section 30 of the *RCY Act* requires the Legislature's Select Standing on Children and Youth to undertake a review of the *RCY Act* every five years, and to make recommendations to government for amendments to the legislation. This is an important process that can lead to significant changes. For example, it was through this process that previous recommendations were made and ultimately enacted to expand the Representative's advocacy jurisdiction to include young adults in receipt of or eligible for CLBC services and, more recently, young adults who were formerly in care and who are eligible for an AYA or the TWP program.

The Committee began its review in late March 2022 and will continue that work in the ensuing year, which includes a call for written submissions from the public and witnesses to appear before the Committee.

To help inform the Committee's deliberations, and submissions from the public to the Committee, the Representative filed a comprehensive written submission to the Committee in April 2022, which is available on both the RCY and Committee's websites. This is an initial submission, which will be followed by a final submission after review of other submissions from the public and feedback from key partners.

The Representative's initial written submission addresses a number of important issues, identifies options and makes express recommendations on a wide range of topics, from incorporation of reference to United Nations human rights instruments into the *RCY Act* through to information-sharing and disclosure. Of particular importance to the Representative are recommendations relating to the core principle that a "whole child" or "whole person" approach should be taken in relation to the Representative's individual and systemic advocacy jurisdiction, so the entire range of a child's or young adult's needs can be fully addressed. For example, even though education plays a crucial role in a child's development, the Representative does not currently have jurisdiction over special education services for children with extra support needs. As well, some key program services for children with support needs that are administered by health authorities fall outside the Representative's jurisdiction. Similarly, the Representative's jurisdiction in relation to young adults is narrowly defined and limited to specifically named programs and excludes a wide range of services necessary to ensure an effective transition to adulthood, such as mental health and addiction services, specialized health services and housing.

The Representative looks forward to the Committee's recommendations – and subsequent government action – on these and other important matters, so that services to children, youth and young adults can be more comprehensively and effectively addressed.



# What's Coming Up?

Look for these and more projects now underway...

## Children and youth with support needs

In 2022/23, RCY will build on the work of previous reports that have highlighted issues experienced by children, youth and their families with respect to Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) services. Reports entitled *Alone and Afraid*, *Left Out* and *Excluded* all detail significant systemic gaps and barriers to supporting children and youth with support needs and call for an overhaul of the systems of care that are delivered by MCFD's CYSN system and other ministries. MCFD is currently building a new CYSN Framework in which children, youth and families will be served through community-based Family Connection Centres and is working toward full implementation by 2025. Families, community-based advocates and service providers have expressed concerns about different aspects of the Family Connection Centre model. RCY will embark on a multi-faceted CYSN initiative that will: review the proposed framework and assess how well it addresses the concerns raised about CYSN and previous RCY recommendations; identify opportunities to MCFD to improve the framework; advocate for needed resources; and monitor MCFD's progress as it implements and evaluates the framework.

## Gender diverse children and youth

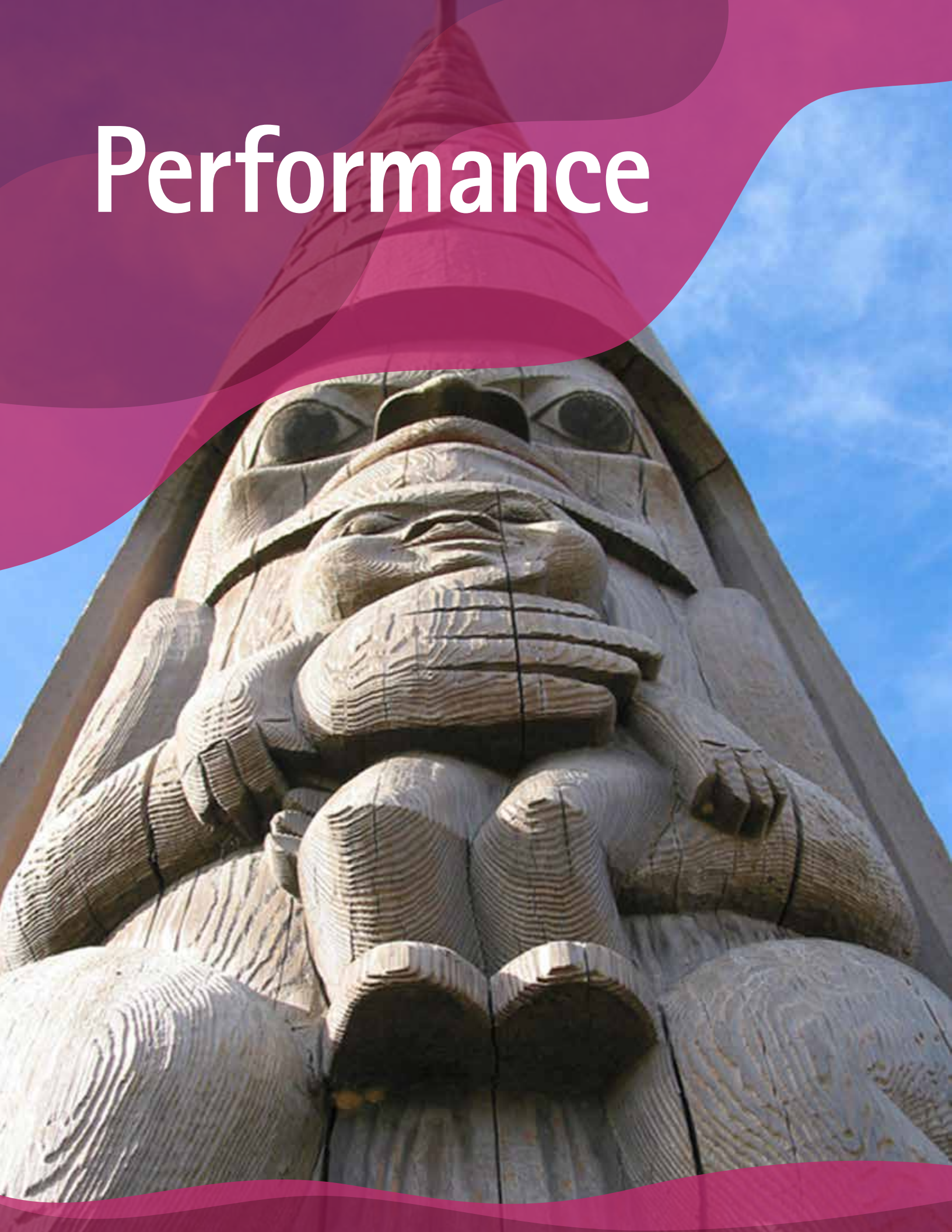
Gender diverse young people thrive when they receive affirming, compassionate and timely care and support. Sadly, through our critical injury and death reviews and advocacy work, we too often see young people who are not receiving what they need to thrive and who are experiencing stigma, discrimination, shame, 'unbelonging' and harm. In 2022/23, the Reviews and Investigations team will release a report exploring the experiences of gender diverse children and youth who receive reviewable and designated services in B.C. and will provide recommendations to enhance affirming supports. This work is being done in partnership with the UBC Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC) team and other service delivery partners and experts. In addition to drawing upon literature and research evidence, the report will be bolstered through RCY's Reviews and Investigations data and the voices and stories of youth.

## Systems failing girls

In 2022/23, RCY will undertake a project steeped in Indigenous worldviews and based in RCY's Six Rs to identify how a lack of coordinated government supports directly and indirectly impacts girls in care who have multi-faceted and complex needs. Using a multi-team, decolonized approach, the project will elevate and focus on the situations of girls who were and are in government care, and will aim to challenge the "deficit narrative" – that is, the idea that there is something wrong with the youth themselves. Instead, this project will illuminate how systems are not working for them. This report will seek to build upon patterns identified by RCY that show an increasing frequency of systemic failings. It will also aim to articulate the role of systemic racism and gendered vulnerabilities, which are related to the core findings of the final report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG.



# Performance





This year, the Office has continued to assess its performance by tracking standard measures related to its relevance, responsiveness, accountability and excellence.

In the 2022/23 fiscal year, RCY will review how it measures its performance and whether the measures that have been in place for a number of years – that are reflected in this *Annual Report and Service Plan* – remain relevant and informative. RCY will work with the SSCCY and other organizations to revise its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with the goal of better measuring its impact.

## Measuring Performance

The Representative's Office measures its performance in meeting its mandate and achieving its vision and goals through assessing the following outcomes:

**Relevance** – means that the Office:

- addresses issues and areas of concern within its mandate and of interest to the Legislature and the public
- is aware of and reacts readily and appropriately to issues brought to its attention through its monitoring and review and investigation activities, its liaison and collaboration with public bodies and by legislators, stakeholders and the public
- produces reports that are useful to, accessible and understood by the public, stakeholders and Legislature
- makes recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of designated programs and reviewable services with the goal of improving the child-, youth- and young adult-serving system.

**Responsiveness** – means that the Office:

- addresses requests from children, youth, young adults and their families for support, assistance, information and advice in a timely and sensitive way
- analyzes and takes timely and appropriate action in relation to reported critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services
- reaches out to children, youth, young adults and their families, the child-, youth- and young adult-serving system and communities to build awareness of the rights of children, youth and young adults and the services of the Office.

**Accountability** – means that the Office:

- reports regularly and in an open and transparent way about its activities to the Legislature and British Columbians
- provides information on its plans, activities and performance to SSCCY for review and scrutiny.

**Excellence** – means that the Office meets high standards of professional and corporate conduct through:

- a competent, ethical and diverse staff
- rigorous application and compliance with established requirements in all its operations.



# Relevance

The Representative's Office ensures relevance in meeting its oversight and accountability role by addressing areas of concern within its mandate that are of interest and importance to the Legislature and public. This is measured by the extent to which the work of the Office responds to concerns or matters brought to the attention of the Representative through the Office's oversight activities and liaison and collaboration with public bodies and other stakeholders, illustrating that the Representative is alert to issues, is in touch with the system and stakeholders and reacts accordingly.

Key Performance Indicator:	2021/22 target	2021/22 result	2022/23 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of the work of the Office, as reflected in public reports, papers, submissions and statements of position, that was in response to a concern or matter arising from an external source or stakeholder</li> </ul>	50%	50%	50%

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2021/22 results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public accountability for the review and investigation of critical injuries and deaths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>preparation and production of public information outlining the number of reports received, reviews undertaken and cases identified for investigation by the Representative</li> </ul>	RCY reports annually on the number of reports received, reviews undertaken and cases identified for investigation in its <i>Annual Report and Service Plan</i> .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ongoing monitoring and tracking of action taken on recommendations made to public bodies by the Representative on improvements and enhancements to child- and youth-serving services and programs</li> </ul>	The Office will be reviewing the way in which it reports on the implementation of recommendations to enable it to better understand progress made and action taken in response to RCY recommendations made in key priority areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevance to the public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitoring interest in the work of the Office by tracking the number of times information and resources on the Representative's website are viewed by the public</li> </ul>	In 2021/22, the Representative's website received 4,192,716 hits. In total, 57,599 unique users accessed 844,625 pages on the site.



# Responsiveness

Timely and effective response to requests for assistance and support from vulnerable children, youth, young adults and their families, as well as timely and effective reviews and investigations of incidents of critical injury or death are essential for the Representative to meet her mandate.

Key Performance Indicator:	2021/22 target	2021/22 result	2022/23 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of adult callers requesting advocacy services the Office responds to within the established three-day response timeline</li> </ul>	100%	90%*	100%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of screening and review of reports of child and youth critical injuries or deaths that are completed by the Office within the established two-month timeframe</li> </ul>	100%	100%	100%

\* 99.93 per cent of adult callers were responded to within five days

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2021/22 results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsiveness to advocacy requests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the percentage of youth requests for service responded to within 24 hours. The goal is to ensure that all youth in contact with the Office receive an initial response to their request for service within this period</li> </ul>	In 2021/22, 98 per cent** of youth contacting the Advocacy team were called back within 24 hours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tracking the number of appearances or presentations by Office staff at stakeholder and community events, the number of community relations and engagement activities and the number of communities visited with the goal of ensuring that the Representative is engaging and reaching out to children, youth, young adults and their families and stakeholders across the province</li> </ul>	In 2021/22, the Representative and staff participated in 276 community engagement activities. This included participation in events, conferences, workshops, meetings and speaking engagements. The Appendix includes a list of outreach and community engagement activities undertaken by the Representative and staff in 2021/22.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of interactions and engagement activities with youth to raise awareness about their rights and the services of the Office. The goal is to steadily increase the awareness of youth and young adults through increased events and interactions</li> </ul>	In 2021/22, the Representative and staff directly connected with 226 youth and young adults through such activities as virtual and some in-person events, online workshops and engagement sessions.***



Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2021/22 results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of collaborative efforts or initiatives with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous communities and organizations on mutually identified issues of shared concern</li> </ul>	<p>In 2021/22, the Representative and staff met with 28 First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous organizations and participated in 36 Indigenous events, conferences and speaking engagements.</p>

\*\* 99.65 per cent of youth were responded to within three days.

\*\*\*This number is significantly lower than pre-COVID-19 pandemic years as a result of the cancellation of a number of major in-person outreach events and conferences hosted by and for youth.

## Accountability

A key outcome for the Representative is to be accountable to the Legislature and British Columbians for the work of her Office. A broad measure of how the Representative demonstrates her accountability is through the public release of reports and papers as well as comments and statements about the findings of her work.

Key Performance Indicator:	2021/22 target	2021/22 result	2022/23 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of reports and papers publicly released and the number of public statements made by the Representative</li> </ul>	10 reports and statements	16 reports and statements	10 reports and statements

Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2021/22 results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting on activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of times the Representative makes presentations to the SSCCY and SSCFGS</li> </ul>	<p>In 2021/22, the Representative appeared before the SSCCY five times: on Wednesday, March 30, 2022 (in person) on ministry presentations on the report <i>Excluded: Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and their Families</i>; on Friday, Jan. 28, 2022 (virtual) to present the Representative's <i>2020/21 Annual Report and 2021/22 to 2023/2024 Service Plan</i>; on Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021 (virtual) to discuss the <i>Excluded</i> report; on Tuesday, June 29, 2021 (virtual) to discuss the <i>Skye's Legacy: A Focus on Belonging</i> report and on Friday, April 23, 2021 (virtual) to present on the <i>Excluded</i> report.</p> <p>The Representative appeared before the SSCFGS two times: on Tuesday, June 22, 2021 (virtual) to provide a spring 2021 update on RCY's approved budget and on Monday, Nov. 22, 2021 (virtual) for the annual review of RCY's budget proposal.</p>



# Excellence

Excellence in service delivery is achieved and maintained through competent and skilled staff. A key indicator of the Office's achievement of excellence is the extent to which staff undertake ongoing professional development to ensure that they stay current and up-to-date on emerging issues and trends, expand their knowledge and skills base and promote their own personal development.

Key Performance Indicator:	2021/22 target	2021/22 result	2022/23 target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of full-time and part-time staff who participate in ongoing professional development</li> </ul>	95%	94%*	95%

\* Documentation is not always submitted for less formal training and professional development opportunities that do not have formal registration requirements, so the actual percentage of participation is likely higher.

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

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



Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2021/22 results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff contribution to meeting mandate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the degree to which staff are engaged in their work and perceive that they contribute to the achievement of the Office's mandate</li> </ul>	<p>Staff continue to be engaged with activities in support of a positive and effective workplace culture through working groups and communities of practice. The Indigenous Cultural Safety and Inclusion Circle is an open group for RCY staff to attend to have a space to journey with their peers towards cultural safety by learning and actively addressing systemic and structural racism. The group does this by hosting courageous conversations with compassion and curiosity and bringing forward the gifts of ancestors. The Collaboration Working Group continued its work to generate ideas on how RCY as a whole could work more collaboratively. The group introduced a focus on how collaboration has evolved with the emergence of remote work, including a staff survey for feedback on what has worked and where improvements could be made.</p> <p>At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when staff began remote work, RCY shifted from monthly all-staff to weekly all-staff meetings during which time HR and pandemic response updates and information were shared, staff were celebrated for their work, significant events were acknowledged and discussed (e.g., discovery of the 215 children), and systemic issues were discussed. Although optional, the majority of staff attend and they have opted to continue the weekly sessions.</p>



Other Indicators of Performance	Measured by	2021/22 results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health, safety and well-being of staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Office addresses any health and safety matters immediately and effectively in compliance with occupational health and safety laws and meets the needs of staff. Ongoing support for activities and programs to support staff well-being is provided</li> </ul>	<p>Committee continued to focus on supporting RCY Executive with the workplace response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As public health orders changed, the committee updated the COVID-19 safety plan, supported supervisors to orient new staff to workplace protocols and prepared to shift to a Communicable Disease Prevention Plan. RCY Executive maintained a focus on mental health and well-being through regular reminders in staff videoconferences and updates of well-being resources, including RCY's Specialized Counselling Program, available to employees. RCY Executive coordinated well-being and cultural safety supports for employees through healing circles, office cleansing/brushings and Elder supports in partnership with Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing compliance with core policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office policies and procedures adhere to applicable core government policies, standards and practices and the Office meets budgeting and audit standards and requirements</li> </ul>	<p>RCY is audited by the Office of the Auditor General as part of its annual Consolidated Revenue Fund audit.</p>



# Budget and Expenditures





The Office is funded by the Legislative Assembly through a voted appropriation. The vote provides separately for operating expenses and capital acquisitions. Any unused appropriation cannot be carried forward for use in subsequent fiscal years.

The budget shown in the tables below is based on budgeted expenses approved by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (Annual Review of the Budgets of Statutory Offices – February 2021). The following tables and graphs compare the voted appropriation to total operating and capital expenditures for fiscal year 2021/22.

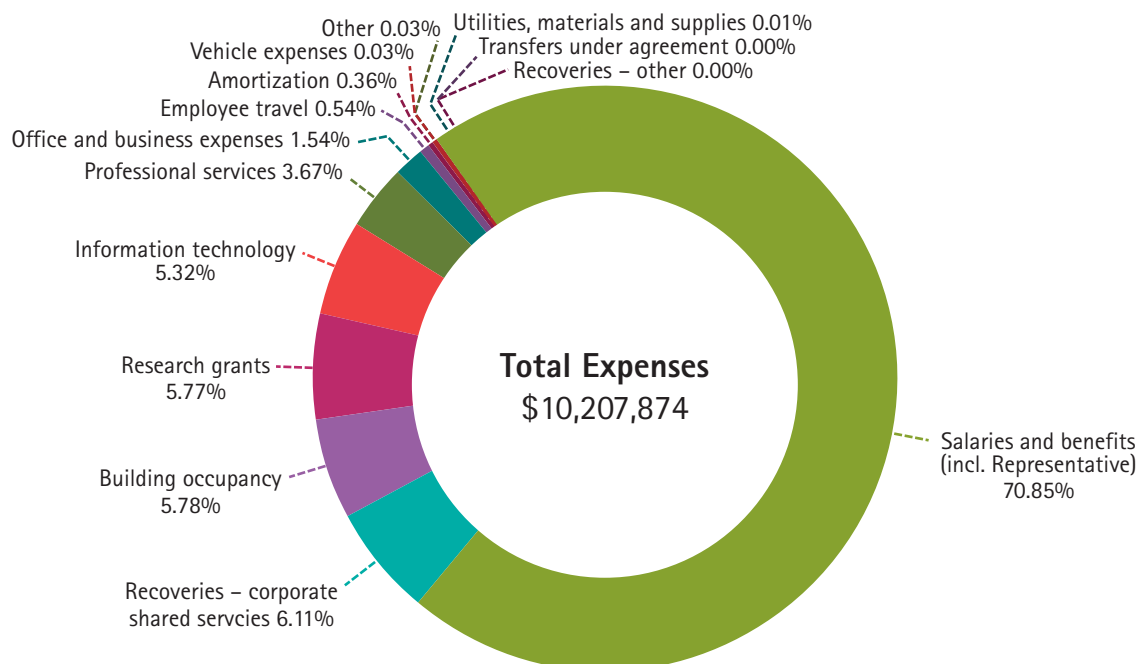
## Actual Expenditure and Budget – 2021/22

Operating Expense Type	Budget	Actual
Salaries and benefits (incl. Representative)	8,669,000	8,240,269
Employee travel	345,000	63,358
Professional services	402,000	426,953
Information technology	627,000	618,218
Office and business expenses	436,000	178,740
Utilities, materials and supplies	5,000	754
Vehicle expenses	8,000	2,982
Amortization	55,000	41,677
Building occupancy	797,000	671,788
Research grants	5,000	670,860
Transfers under agreement	5,000	-
Recoveries – corporate shared services	(711,000)	(711,000)
Recoveries – other	(3,000)	-
Other	1,000	3,275
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>10,641,000</b>	<b>10,207,874</b>

Capital Expense Type	Budget	Actual
Information technology	45,000	1,985
Office furniture and equipment	5,000	6,453
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>8,438</b>



## Actual Expenditures by Expense Type – 2021/22



## Looking to the Future – Approved and Planned Budget for 2022/23 to 2024/25

The table below illustrates operating and capital budgets approved for 2022/23 and planned for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

[Note: the planned review of the RCY budget may result in adjustments to the amount expended by Operating Expense Type]

Operating	Note	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Salaries and benefits	1	8,094,000	8,802,000	8,802,000
Employee travel	2	355,000	355,000	355,000
Professional services	3	402,000	402,000	402,000
Information technology	4	630,000	622,000	622,000
Office and business expenses	5	437,000	432,000	432,000
Utilities, materials and supplies	6	5,000	5,000	5,000
Vehicle expenses	7	8,000	8,000	8,000
Amortization	8	55,000	55,000	55,000
Building occupancy	9	817,000	837,000	857,000
Research grants	10	5,000	5,000	5,000
Transfers under agreement	11	5,000	5,000	5,000
Other expenses	12	1,000	1,000	1,000
Recoveries	13	(642,000)	(527,000)	(527,000)
<b>Total Operating</b>		<b>10,982,000</b>	<b>11,002,000</b>	<b>11,022,000</b>

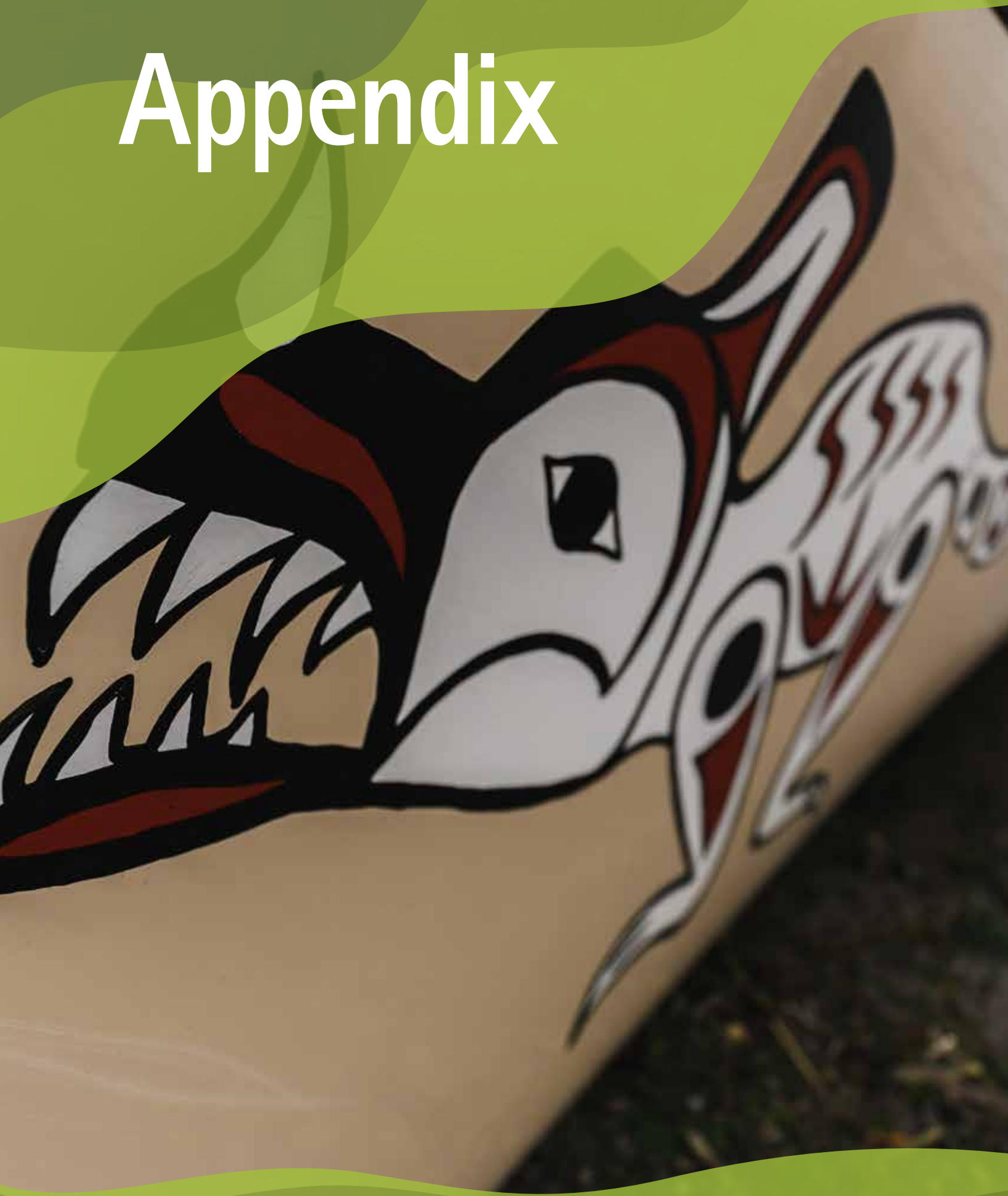


Capital Expense Type	Note	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Information technology	14	45,000	45,000	45,000
Office furniture and equipment	15	5,000	5,000	5,000
<b>Total Capital</b>		<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>

- Note 1 Base salaries, supplementary salaries (first aid allowance, maternity/parental leave, auxiliary health and welfare, etc.) and benefits (including relocation) for all regular and auxiliary staff including the Representative.
- Note 2 Employee travel includes costs for staff on official Office business, including prescribed allowances.
- Note 3 Professional services includes fees and expenses for professional services rendered directly to the Office for the provision of services in the delivery of our programs, the provision of services required by statute or legislation that are billed directly to the Office, and the provision of services that will assist the development of policy and/or programs or improve/change the delivery of programs, such as management consulting services.
- Note 4 Information technology (operating) – includes all contract fees and costs related to data, voice, image and text processing operations and services, such as data and word processing, data communications, supplies, repairs, maintenance and short-term rentals of information processing equipment.
- Note 5 Office and business expenses include supplies and services required for the operation of the Office.
- Note 6 Utilities, materials and supplies include the cost of services such as the supply of water and electricity, materials and supplies required for the normal operation of government services.
- Note 7 Vehicle expenses includes the costs associated with the repair and maintenance of Office vehicles.
- Note 8 Amortization includes the amortization of the cost of capital assets and prepaid capital advances over their useful lives.
- Note 9 Building occupancy includes payments for the rental and/or maintenance of Office accommodation, including tenant improvements that do not meet the criteria for capitalization.
- Note 10 Research grants include payments to individuals, businesses, non-profit associations and other entities which may include stipulations as to the use of the funds and which are not entitlements or shared cost arrangements.
- Note 11 Transfers under agreement include payments made under the terms of a contract or agreement for which the Office does not receive any direct goods or services.
- Note 12 Other expenses include expenses such as financing costs, valuation allowances and other expenses which cannot be reasonably allocated to another category.
- Note 13 Internal and external recoveries include the recovery of costs from other Officers of the Legislature, ministries, participants and sponsoring organizations for activities described within the vote.
- Note 14 Information technology (capital) includes the purchase or capital lease cost of mainframe and other systems hardware, software and related equipment.
- Note 15 Office furniture and equipment includes the cost or capital lease cost of office furniture and equipment.



# Appendix



# List of Outreach and Communications Activities

## Events, Conferences and Speaking Engagements

- 2022 Early Years Conference: Disruption and Transformation Presentation (March 2022)
- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society: Information Session (April 2021)
- A Community of Practice – Mad Pride: A Deeper Understanding of Mental Illness Information Session (July 2021)
- Adams Lake Indian Band: Walking the Spirits Home Ceremony (June 2021)
- Adler University (Vancouver) Podcast (November 2021)
- Adoptive Families Association of BC: Stand Together Conference (January 2022)
- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres: Annual General Meeting (September 2021)
- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres: Status Quo is No Longer an Option: Towards a Coalition on Action Against Indigenous-Specific Racism in Health Care Conference (June 2021)
- BC Association of Child Development Institute: Members Meeting (October 2021)
- BC Child and Youth in Care Week: Kick Off Celebration (June 2021)
- BC Children's Hospital Rounds Talk: Left Out: Children and Youth with Special Needs (April 2021)
- BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils: District Parent Advisory Councils Summit (November 2021)
- BC Legislative Internship Program Presentation (April 2021)
- BC Pediatric Society: Annual General Meeting (September 2021)
- BC People First: Unlearn Ableism Event (May 2021)
- Board Voice: Invitation to a Dialogue (June 2021)
- British Columbia School Trustees Association: Trustee Orientation & Academy Event (December 2021)
- Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates: Presentation from GlobalChild (January 2022)
- Canadian Federation of University Women: RCY Information Session (March 2022)
- Camosun College, Community, Family and Child Studies Program: RCY Information Session (March 2022)
- Campbell River Early Years Council: RCY Information Session (December 2021)
- Childcare Resource and Referral Program Interior Region: RCY Information Session (October 2021)
- Child Welfare League of America in partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Suicide Prevention Resource Centre: Intersection of Child Welfare and Suicide Prevention Information Session (January 2022)
- Child Welfare League of Canada and National Council of Youth in Care Advocates: Supporting Equitable Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care in Canada Presentation (December 2022)
- Child Welfare League of Canada: Beyond Neglect Webinar (April 2021)



- Collaborative Planning and Decision-Making in Child Welfare Community of Practice (October 2021)
- Circle of Care with Stephanie Papik: RCY Staff Learning Opportunity (November 2021)
- Complexity Podcast with InWithForward (June 2021)
- COVID Outreach: Cariboo Friendship Society (February 2022)
- COVID Outreach: Carrier Sekani Family Services (December 2021)
- COVID Outreach: Conayt Friendship Society (February 2022)
- COVID Outreach: Haida Child and Family Services Society (August 2021 and January 2022)
- COVID Outreach: Haida Gwaii Society for Community Peace (January 2022)
- COVID Outreach: Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (August 2021)
- COVID Outreach: Lheidli T'enneh First Nation (August 2021)
- COVID Outreach: Mamalilikulla First Nation (August 2021)
- COVID Outreach: Ooknakane Friendship Centre (August 2021)
- COVID Outreach: Pauquachin First Nation (August 2021)
- COVID Outreach: Shuswap Indian Band (November 2021)
- COVID Outreach: Skidegate Health Centre (January 2022)
- Delegated Aboriginal Agency Practice Leads Presentation (June 2021)
- Ending Violence Association: Tracy Porteous Acknowledgment Celebration (March 2022)
- Family Services of Greater Victoria: Picnic In the Park (July 2021)
- Family Support Institute Advocacy Advisory Committee: Advocacy and Allies Speaking Engagement (May 2021)
- Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks: September Fed Connects Speaking Engagement (September 2021)
- Federation of Community Social Services of BC: Removing Barriers, Improving Outcomes: An Anti-Racism Professional Development Opportunity (October 2021)
- Federation of Community Social Services of BC: Social Policy Forum (February 2022)
- First Call BC: Advocacy Day RCY Workshop (October 2022)
- First Call BC Monthly Meetings (April 2021 – March 2022)
- First Nations Health Authority Sacred and Strong: Upholding our Matriarchal Roles Event (July 2022)
- For Love* Film Screening Event (September 2021)
- Fostering Change Advocates' Presentation (October 2021)
- Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre: RCY Information Session (June 2021)
- Gender Diversity in the Workplace facilitated by Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting: RCY Staff Learning Opportunity (January 2022)
- Government House Spring Session Reception (March 2022)
- Human Early Learning Partnership BC: Conference (March 2022)
- Human Early Learning Partnership BC: Middle Years Development Instrument Information Session (August 2021)
- Human Early Learning Partnership BC: Virtual Conference (April 2021)
- Indigenous Cultural Safety Collaborative Learning Series (June 2021)
- Indigenous Early Years/Family Circle RCY-led Information Gathering Event (October 2021)
- Indigenous Strategies for Community Inclusion Working Group facilitated by Community Living BC (May 2021)



- Indigenous Perspectives Society: Aboriginal Social Worker Training Presentation (June 2021, October 2021 and March 2022)
- Indigenous Perspectives Society: Aboriginal Social Worker Training Program Graduation Ceremonies, Victoria (November 2021 and March 2022)
- Indigenous Perspectives Society: Aboriginal Social Worker Delegation Training Program Graduation Ceremony (July 2021)
- International Overdose Awareness Day with Moms Stop the Harm, Aids Vancouver Island and the United Way (August 2021)
- Kw'umut Lelum Cedar Gala, Nanaimo (March 2022)
- Mamalilikulla First Nation Gathering (October 2021)
- McCreary Centre Society: TRRUST Collective Gathering (September 2021)
- McCreary Centre Society: Violence Exposure: The victimization experiences of male, female and non-binary youth in BC Report Launch Event (December 2021)
- MCFD Provincial Practice Branch Presentation: FASD Report (September 2021)
- MCFD Sunshine Coast: In-Service Training Presentation (June 2021)
- MCFD Victoria Team Leaders Presentation (November 2021)
- Mental Health Research Canada: See us, hear us – Children, youth, and families in Saskatchewan coping with mental health during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic Research Webinar (January 2022)
- National Agreement in Principle Webinar (February 2022)
- National Indigenous People's Day Event hosted by Carnegie Community Centre and UBC Learning Exchange (June 2021)
- North Island Building Blocks Community Outreach (August 2021)
- Ooknakane Friendship Centre Gathering (August 2021)
- Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters Event (September 2021)
- Pink Shirt Day Event (February 2022)
- Prince George Youth Custody Services: RCY Monthly Advocacy Outreach Clinic (Virtual) (April 2021 to March 2022; June 2021 clinic cancelled)
- Prince George Youth Custody Centre: RCY Presentation (June 2021)
- Prince George Foundry: RCY Information Session (July 2021)
- Provincial Association of Residential & Community Agencies (PARCA): Special Session (March 2022)
- Public Health Agency of Canada: The Strength of Family and Connections Webinar (November 2021)
- Quatsino First Nation Outreach (November 2021)
- RCY Advocacy Information Session for Port Hardy Professional Adults (July 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: BC Alternate Educators Conference (February 2022)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Boys and Girls Club of Kamloops (February 2022)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: College of New Caledonia (April 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks Local Knowledge Share (December 2021 and March 2022)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Foundry Terrace (March 2022)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Funding Your Future session (November 2021 and January 2022)



- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Interior Community Services (September 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: One Sky Community Resources Society (December 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Northern Lights College (April 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Foundry Penticton (March 2022)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Post Secondary Information Sessions (April and May 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Prince George Native Friendship Centre Reconnect Youth Village (October 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: Thompson Rivers University (April 2021 and September 2021)
- RCY Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and Tuition Waiver (TW) Project: University of Northern BC (September 2021)
- RCY Deputy Representative Information Sessions Webinars (May/June 2021)
- RCY Executive Director of Reviews and Investigations Information Session Webinar (September 2021)
- RCY Webinar on the *Skye's Legacy* Report (July 2021)
- School District 57 (Prince George): Community Engagement (March 2022)
- School District 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith): Community Engagement (August 2021)
- School District 85 (Vancouver Island North): Community Engagement (November 2021)
- Social Venture Partners Presentation (December 2021)
- Sophie's Place Child and Youth Advocacy Centre: Virtual Provincial Conference (February 2022)
- Squamish LIL'WAT Cultural Centre: Drumming Circle for National Indigenous Peoples Day Event (June 2021)
- Statistics Canada: The Importance of Data Quality Webinar (February 2022)
- Sophie's Place Conference: "A Multidisciplinary Response to Child Maltreatment: A Path to Healing" (February 2022)
- Statutory Officers Meet & Greet with MLAs (October 2021)
- Surrounded by Cedar: Annual General Meeting (October 2021)
- Surrounded by Cedar: RCY Information Session (July 2021)
- The Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia: Child Protection Conference 2021 (June 2021)
- The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children: Implementing Children's Rights in Family Court Cases Webinar (November 2021)
- Touchstone Family Association: All Staff RCY Information Session (September 2021)
- University of British Columbia, Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre: RCY Staff Learning Opportunity (December 2021)
- University of British Columbia, Janusz Korczak Association of Canada Course: Opening Presentation (September 2021)
- University of British Columbia, Dean's Distinguished Lecture: Reconciling History and Presentation of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada Medal (November 2021)
- Women's Health Research Institute: Mentor & Networking Event (January 2022)
- Western University: Tensions of 2SLGBTQIA+ Structural Inclusion Within the Gender-Based Violence Sector Webinar (February 2022)





Work Able Presentation: Turning the Inaccessible into the Accessible: RCY Staff Learning Opportunity (January 2022)

Wrapping Our Ways Around Them: RCY Staff Learning Opportunity (October and November 2021)

## Meetings

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

Alberta Office of the Child and Youth Advocate	Family Support Institute of BC Society
A Way Home Kamloops Society	Federation of Community Social Services of BC
Aunt Leah's Place	Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
Autism Community Training (ACT)	First Call BC
AutismBC	Foundry BC
BC Association for Child Development and Intervention	HerWay Home, Island Health
BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness	Hollyburn Community Services Society
BC Complex Kids Society	Housing First for Youth
BC Council for Families	Inclusion BC
BCEd Access Society	Janusz Korczak Association of Canada
BC Family Justice Innovation Lab	Looking Glass Foundation
Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates	Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth
Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division	McCreary Centre Society
Childhood Development Centre of Prince George and District	McCreary Centre Society TRRUST Collective
Child Health BC	Moms Stop the Harm
Children's Healthcare Canada	Nanaimo Women's Centre
Children's Forum	North Okanagan Youth and Family Services
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC	Ontario Ombudsman
Collaborative Group on Children and Youth with Support Needs Framework	Provincial Association of Residential & Community Agencies
Cowichan Valley Youth Services Society	Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth
Covenant House Vancouver	Society for Children and Youth of BC, Child and Youth Legal Centre
Ending Violence Association of BC	S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
Family Resource Programs of BC	Youth Development Institute
Family Services of Greater Vancouver	YMCA of Northern BC
Family Services of Greater Victoria	Yukon Child and Youth Advocate



## Indigenous Leadership/Organizations

Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC	Lalum'utul' Smun'eem Child and Family Services
Aboriginal Infant Development Programs of BC	Lu'ma Native Housing Society
Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program	Métis Nation British Columbia
BC Aboriginal Child Care Society	Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres	Nezul Be Hunuyeh Child and Family Services Society
BC First Nations Justice Council	Port Alberni Friendship Society
Carrier Sekani Child and Family Services	Prince George Native Friendship Centre
Cowichan Tribes	Secwepemc Child and Family Services
First Nations Health Authority	Tsow Tun Le Lum Society
First Nations Leadership Council	Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
Hiiye'ye Lelum House of Friendship	Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society
Indigenous Child and Family Services Directors' Executive	Xyolhemeylh/Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society
Indigenous Perspectives Society	Yeqox Nilin Justice Society
K'tunaxa First Nation	
Kw'umut Lelum Child and Family Services	

## Government Organizations

Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment	Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP
BC Housing	Community Living BC
B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training	Cowichan Valley Regional District
B.C. Ministry of Attorney General	Elections BC
B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development	Indigenous Services Canada
B.C. Ministry of Citizens' Services	Members of the Legislative Assembly of B.C.
B.C. Ministry of Education	Mental Health School Start-Up Working Group
B.C. Ministry of Health	Ministère de la Famille Québec
B.C. Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions	North Cowichan Municipality
B.C. Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction	Office of Housing and Construction Standards, B.C.
BC Public Service Agency	Office of the Auditor General, B.C.
Children's Forum	Office of the Chief Coroner, B.C.
City of Duncan	Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, B.C.
	Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, B.C.



Office of the Information and Privacy  
Commissioner, B.C.  
Office of the Merit Commissioner, B.C.

Office of the Ombudsperson, B.C.  
Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner, B.C.  
Public Guardian and Trustee, B.C.

## Other

Access to Justice BC, Family Justice Leadership  
Strategy Group  
Access to Justice BC, Intersectoral Family  
Justice Dialogues  
BC Association of Chiefs of Police  
BC Children's Hospital  
BC Council for Families  
BC Family Justice Innovation Lab  
BC Non-Profit Housing Association  
BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre  
British Columbia School Trustees Association  
Board Voice  
Children's Health Policy Centre, Simon Fraser  
University  
Child and Youth Meaningful Participation  
Community of Practice  
Child Welfare League of Canada  
Community Coordination for Women's Safety  
Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education  
Fostering Change  
Fraser Health Authority  
Freda Centre for Research on Violence Against  
Women and Children  
Harvard University  
Hon. Judge Tom Gove (Ret.)  
Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP),  
University of B.C.

HELP Aboriginal Steering Committee, University  
of B.C.  
Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy  
Interior Health Authority  
InWithForward  
Northern Health Authority  
Provincial Association of Residential &  
Community Agencies (PARCA)  
Provincial Health Services Authority  
Queens University  
RainCity Housing and Support Society  
RCMP  
School District 79 (Cowichan)  
Simon Fraser University  
Social Venture Partners  
Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable  
Youth Centre  
UBC Okanagan  
University of British Columbia  
University of Northern British Columbia  
University of Victoria  
Vancouver Coastal Health  
Vancouver Island Health Authority  
Victoria Police Department

# Contact Information

## Phone

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

## Text (children and youth)

1-778-404-7161

## Chat (children and youth)

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

## E-mail

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

## Offices

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

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


## Fax

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


## Website

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

## Social Media

 B.C.'s Representative  
for Children and Youth  
and RCYBC Youth

 Rep4Youth

 @rcybc and @rcybcyouth

 @rcybcyouth



REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH