

Territorial Acknowledgement: The Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office (YCAO) respectfully acknowledges that we work and live on the traditional territories of the 14 Yukon First Nations. Government policies have caused violent and long-lasting impacts to Indigenous children and youth, and we commit ourselves to working in partnership with Yukon First Nations by integrating traditional knowledge and culture for the safety and wellbeing of children throughout the territory.

Mission (what is our purpose?) - We commit to upholding the rights and amplifying the voices of children and youth throughout the Yukon.

Vision (how do we know when our job is done?) - The vision of YCAO is for a safe and healthy society that hears, includes, values, and protects the rights and voices of children and youth.

Core Values (what guides our work?) - YCAO operates from a foundation of Indigenous values and believes that traditional knowledge and culture can guide the work of our office in a way that supports all Yukon children and youth. Currently these values are Empowerment, Integrity, Excellence, Professionalism, Accountability, Self-Determination, and Respect.

Back: Annette King, Selena Kaytor, Rachel Veinott-McKeough

Front: Christopher Tse, Lynda Silverfox, Bengie Clethero, Julia Milnes, Anya Braeuner

Absent: Lindsey Doehle





OFFICE OF THE CHILD & YOUTH ADVOCATE 2070 - 2nd Avenue, Unit 19, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1B1 PH: 456-5575, FAX: 456-5574, ycao.ca

October 31, 2021

The Honourable Jeremy Harper Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Box 2703 Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Re: Child and Youth Advocate Office 2021-22 Annual Report

Dear Speaker Jeremy Harper,

Under my authority as set out in Section 24 of Yukon's Child and Youth Advocate Act, I am pleased to present you with Upping Your Game on Children's Rights: 2021/2022 Annual Report. The document reports on the activities of the Child and Youth Advocate Office during the period April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022.

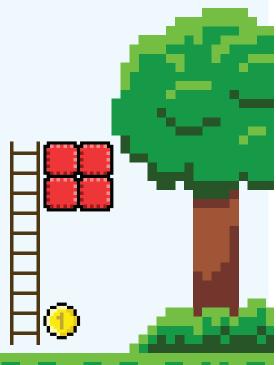
I am requesting a meeting with the Member Services Board for discussion and clarification of our experiences and priorities.

Respectfully,

Annette King, Yukon Child and Youth Advocate

Smelletino





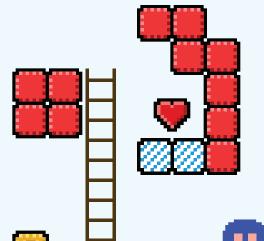




ACCOUNTABILITY MEANS DOING BETTER



We are often asked what it is we do and who we serve at the YCAO. As an office dedicated to children's rights, we hear from community members about issues that Yukon children and youth are facing. Our mission is to uphold the rights and amplify the voices of all Yukon children and youth.



The wellbeing of young people throughout this territory is our sole objective and our bottom line. We work from a spirit of accountability to children and youth, as we believe all governments should be in accordance with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

Accountability to young people remains an intangible goal for the Yukon Government. Through our individual advocacy work, we continue to hear from far too many children and youth who have not had their rights and views upheld when accessing government services. Young people are looking for safe places to stay and support to be able to meet their goals. Young people continue to ask

for improved mental health supports in Whitehorse and the communities. While we continue to see a high number of individual advocacy issues connected to Family and Children's Services, we have experienced a significant rise in advocacy referrals related to the Department of Education. In the wake of multiple testimonies, reviews and reports, students with special needs and their parents say little has improved, and the gap remains in accessing necessary supports for a meaningful education.

Throughout the course of this year we have released or are working on several policy and systemic reviews, including: addressing barriers to school attendance,

a child rights review of amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, and YG's response to abuse in schools. We are calling on Yukon Government to put accountability into action and follow through on their commitments to upholding children's rights.

It is promising that despite the plethora of individual and systemic advocacy issues we address daily, we have met numerous champions in Yukon government and First Nations governments who are taking their duty to uphold children's rights seriously. We are continually impressed and inspired by young leaders throughout the territory who aren't waiting for the adults but instead are turning their

passions to action, leading the way when it comes to reconciliation, climate action, cultural revitalization, and social justice. Our office sits directly across from the Legislative Assembly, where we have a front row seat to children and youth fighting for the environment, safe spaces in schools, and an end to discriminatory dress code policies.

The theme of this year's annual report is playful and nostalgic, but make no mistake - children's rights are not a game. We are encouraged by the successes of the past year and motivated to take on the work that remains. We want to see a move to the next level: action. As a Yukon community, we are accountable to our young people; it's time to up our game!

Annette King, BSW, MSW Youth Advocate

Smelleting





From 2010-2022, YCAO addressed 1,295 issues for 759 children and youth. On January 25, 2022, YCAO reached 1,000 issues resolved.





WHAT DOES YEAD DO?





BEGINNER

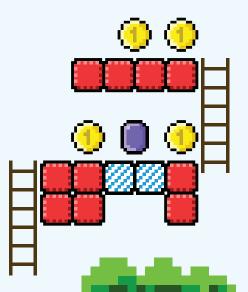
TRIVIA

How many years has YCAO been in operation?











INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

YCAO helps young people effectively access government services and have their views heard and rights considered in the decision-making of government service providers.



SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

YCAO may review and provide advice regarding systemic or policy issues that arise in the course of individual advocacy and raise a substantial question of public interest. The Legislative Assembly or a Minister may refer relevant matters to YCAO for review.



PUBLIC EDUCATION

YCAO provides information about the role of the Advocate and children's rights. YCAO hosts or participates in activities and events that engage youth and the community.

Our work is guided by:

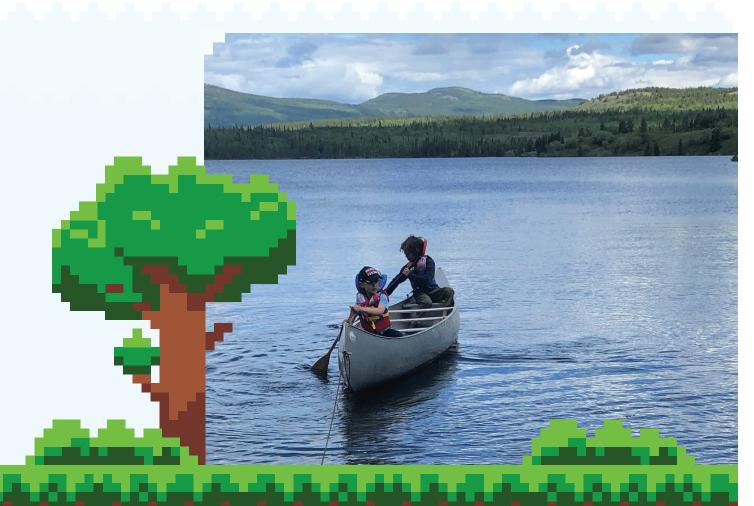
- Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Act
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission 94 Calls to Action
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2s+ Calls to Justice

The Child and Youth Advocate Act (2009) is YCAO's guiding piece of legislation and is long overdue for a review. YCAO has provided submissions to the Member Services Board with recommendations to evolve the role of the Advocate and make the office more effective in its work.

In 2021, YCAO created a youth working group to produce a youth-friendly version of the existing legislation, plan community stakeholder engagement, and provide input into legislative amendments. Our hope is that the Child and Youth Advocate Act will truly become a piece of legislation that is for youth, by youth.







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FINANCIAL STATS

BEGINNER

TRIVIE

How many Articles are in the *United Nations*Convention on the Rights of the Child?

YCAO is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly and submits an annual budget and quarterly updates to the Members Service Board, an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly.

BUDGET

YG TOTAL: \$1,440,185,000

> EDU: \$236,397,000 HSS \$498,792,000

YCHO OFFICE: \$797,000





YERO EXPENDITURES



PERSONNEL:

\$595,514

OPERATIONAL:

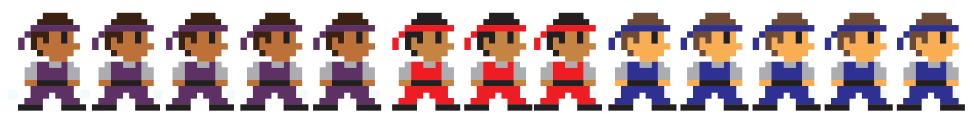
\$167,061

CAPITAL: \$1,000



INDIVIDUAL ROVOCACY

HOW MANY ISSUES DID YCAO ADDRESS?



CARRIED OVER (FROM PAST YEARS) 196 ISSUES RESOLVED 119

6. 9 A

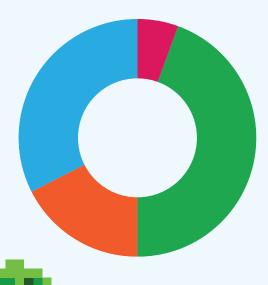
New Informal Advocacy Issues in 2021-22 Informal Advocacy Issues are concerns brought to YCAO that do not directly fit the YCAO mandate for advocacy. YCAO provides information and makes referrals to community resources that may be able to offer support.

NEW ROVOCACY ISSUES 198

> WHERE RRE THE ISSUES?

Whitehorse 68.2%

Communities 31.8%



HOW MANY NEW
ROVOCACY ISSUES
ARE FOR INDIGENOUS
CHILDREN AND
YOUTH?

Unknown 5.6%

Yukon First Nation 44.4%

Indigenous from Outside Yukon 17.7%

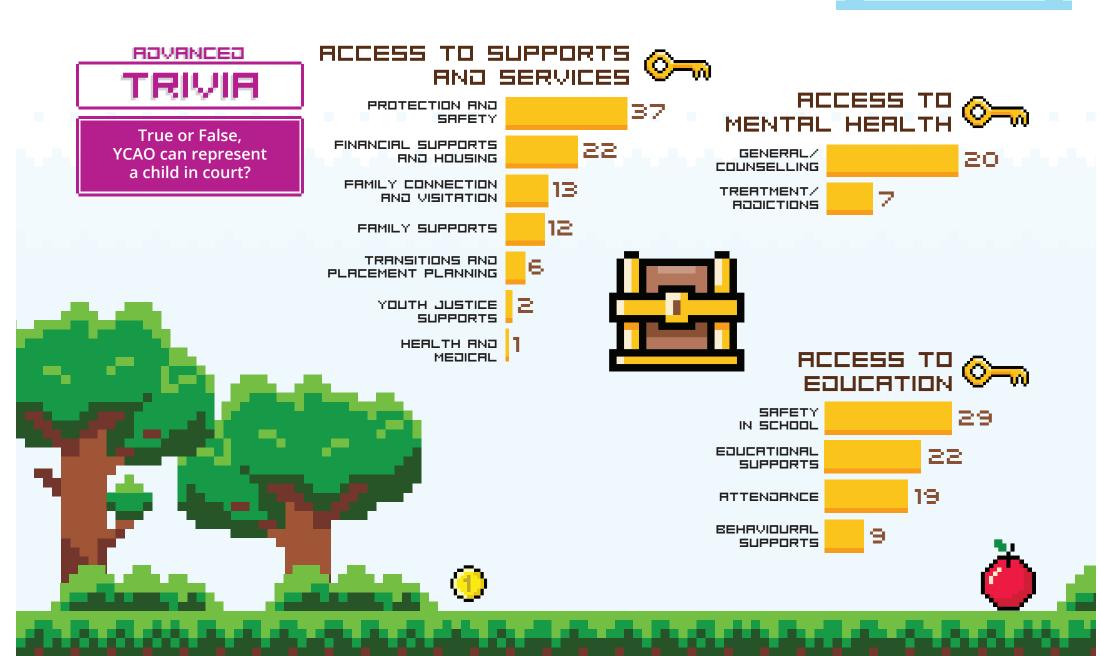
Non-Indigenous 32.3%

"I didn't get a normal childhood... I don't think people my age should have to worry about money and where they'll live. They should be thinking about school... I need a sense of belonging and love. That's what I'm lacking; it matters to me."

~ Youth



WHAT TYPES OF ISSUES



WHICH GOVERNMENT DEPRREMENTS HAD ROVOCACY ISSUES?

DEPRRIMENT (NEW ISSUES)

EDUCATION A.A.A.A.A.A.79

MENTAL WELLNESS A A A 22



OTHER YUKON 🔔 🔔 🥱

уойтн зиятісе 🦺 4

VICTIM SERVICES 🛝 4

WHITEHORSE GENERAL J 3

YUKON HOUSING 🏒 ᢃ



BEGINNER

1月17月

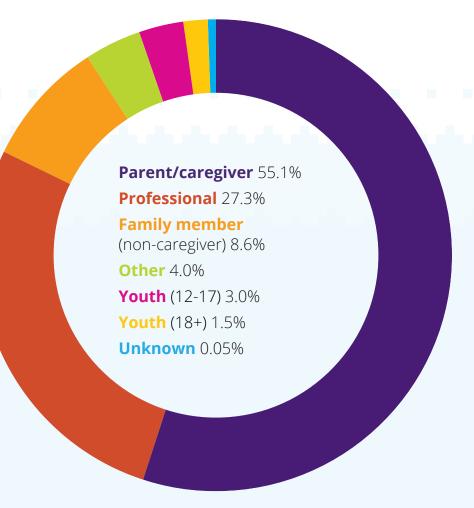
Name three of the six areas of concern identified in YCAO's Review on School Attendance in the Yukon: What is, what could be.



WHO REFERRED THE ISSUES?

"I need counselling.
I used to see a
counsellor, but I feel
like they just quit seeing
me. I struggle with
my mental health and
substance use. I need
someone to talk to"

~ Youth





"I just want someone to talk to [the child] to make sure his voice is heard."

~ Parent





COMMENTARY:

RECONCILIATION RECUIRES ACTION IN THE YUKON: CHILO ROVOCATE

September 30, 2021 is the first official National Day of Recognition for Truth and Reconciliation. It is a day of remembrance and a time to galvanize action in the ongoing battle for young people to have their rights respected. As unmarked graves of children who never returned from residential school continue to be churned up across the country, we are faced with the visceral consequences of what happens when children's rights are violated.

For the YCAO, these consequences are prevalent throughout our work. There needs to be support for parents to build competencies, skills and experiences to compensate for their own rights being ignored as children. Although there are countless examples of brilliant strength and resilience, the impacts of intergenerational trauma stemming from residential schools are undeniable, pervasive, and must be addressed by the government. But how can a government founded on such a violent history truly engage in reconciliation? How can we as a nation ask Indigenous peoples to

reconcile when there are communities without clean water, clear evidence of systemic racism in policing and healthcare, a suicide epidemic that recently prompted three separate First Nations to declare states of emergency, and many Canadians still telling Indigenous people to "just get over it?" Why did it take the finding of little tiny bones in unmarked graves, without coffins, to awaken Canadians to the truth?

In 1989, the United Nations recognized the importance of children as rights holders with unique development and a need for protections in policy by creating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a legally-binding international agreement outlining 54 articles that dictate how governments should safeguard children's rights. Canada signed on in 1991, signifying its pledge to children's rights and committing to the duty of considering children in all policy decisions.

If Canadians are serious about "reconciliation," we must provide the necessary supports to families and

extended families to safely care for their own children. First Nations partnerships must be more than political gameplay. Cultural revitalization must be more than a symbolic token. As a country we need to centre Indigenous wisdom and recognize Indigenous peoples, leaders, language, and values as foundational guides to redefining our country.

The 94 calls to action to address the truth and move toward reconciliation were released in 2015. In our work, we regularly see the burden of residential school on the backs of grandparents, aunties, and cousins taking care of traumatized children with inadequate support. There needs to be investment for family healing and opportunities for emotional growth. Every Canadian can commit to ensuring children are prioritized before rights violations occur. Governments can acknowledge and uphold their duty to meet their obligation to implement, promote and protect children's rights. This would show up in policy development, legislation, budgeting,



Excerpt from the YCAO Editorial published in the Yukon News Sept 2021

and political agendas. The short term and long term impacts on children must be considered in all actions, at all levels of decision-making by policymakers, politicians, and leaders. Imagine if a child rights lens had been considered in the planning stages for residential schools!

Canada ratified children's rights 30 years ago. The time for apologies is over. Now is a time for action.

TRIVIA

On what date did YCAO reach 1,000 issues resolved?







TRIVIA

Name two of the youthserving organizations that are Executive partners with Communities Building Youth Futures.



SYSTEMIC ROVOCACY

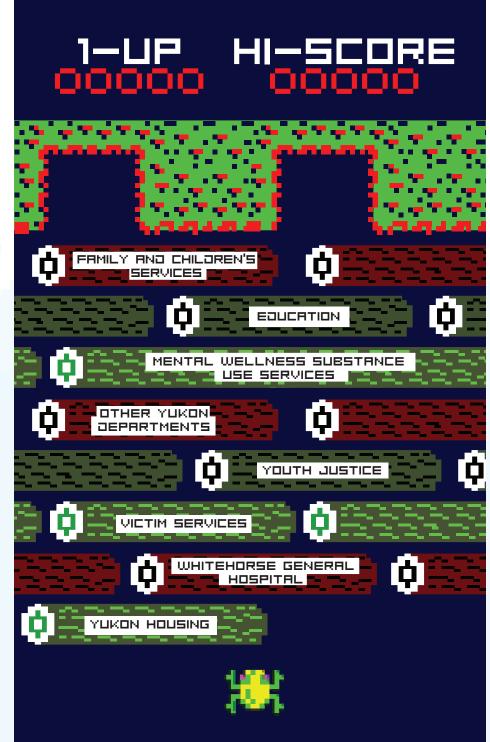
YCAO reviews and provides advice to Yukon government on systemic and policy issues that are related to the individual advocacy issues we address. When YCAO identifies a systemic theme, we notify the Deputy Minister of the relevant YG department.

YCAO is currently analysing and reviewing several systemic themes within the Departments of Health and Social Services and Education. YCAO opened four new systemic issues in 2021/22:

- A child rights review of amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*
- Safety and support at Hidden Valley Elementary School (HVES)
- Response to Restraints and Isolation at Jack Hulland Elementary School (JHES)
- Educational and Behavioural Supports







"Schools could do a much better job of building community. In school you need to build on relationships."

~ Grade 9 student

FACT:

Unless excused under subsection (2). Every child who at September 1 in a year is 6 years or 8 months of age or older, and is younger thatn 16 years of age shall attend a school operated by the Minister of a school board. (s.22 of the Education Act.)

Acceptable excused absence:

- · Sickness or other unavoidable cause
- Participation in religious obserbances, celebrations or activities recognized by a religious denomination
- Participation in Indigenous cultural activities or in Indigenousl harvesting activities
- Student is suspended by the school
- Student is enrolled, and in regular attendance at a private school or home education program
- Student is enrolled in distance education

REVIEW ON SCHOOL ATTENORNCE IN THE YUKON: WHAT IS, WHAT COULD BE

On May 30, 2021, YCAO released a review on school attendance that examined systemic factors leading to school attendance issues and chronic absenteeism in Yukon schools. Through countless conversations with students, families, educators, and community members, the YCAO determined six Areas of Concern that directly impact students' ability to be in the classroom: Belonging & Culture, Safety at School, Behavioural Supports, Educational Supports, Mental Health & Trauma, and Personal Factors.

The review provided 14 recommendations to address these barriers to attendance. YCAO has received a commitment from EDU to respond to the issues but we are still waiting for a public response specific to YCAO's report and a description of how the recommendations will be actioned.

MENTAL
HEALTH & PERSONAL
FACTORS

SHEETY IN SCHOOL

BELONGING
& CULTURE



76% of YCAO clients had missed 20 or more days of school in at least one of the three years prior to COVID.

"You can't be really sorry and not call me. You can't be really sorry and not give me any information. You can't be really sorry and not provide anything for my...kid. You can't be both."

~ Parent

"There is a lot left to uncover in this story. Until we know everything that happened to our children, there won't be justice. I believe there are more child victims."

~ Parent

SRFETY IN SCHOOL

Throughout the 2021-22 school year, YCAO has heard of numerous concerns regarding safety in schools, including allegations of harassment, bullying, and physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.

YCAO is recommending a coordinated response that ensures effective investigations and risk assessment, communication, therapeutic support, and appropriate school programs.

Safety and support at Hidden Valley Elementary School (HVES)

On July 29, 2021, YCAO launched a review on the Yukon Government's response to sexualized abuse at Hidden Valley Elementary School. The review, entitled *Responding to Sexualized Abuse in Yukon Schools: Review of Policies and Governmental Response*, is a comprehensive exploration of the shortcomings in policies and coordinated responses both before and after the abuse occurred. The review highlights four key areas of concern: 1) Reporting and investigating sexualized abuse in schools; 2) Therapeutic supports and coordinated response; 3) Educational supports for children with special needs; and 4) Communication with families and the public. YCAO is providing advice to the Yukon government and will follow up requesting to be advised of YG's steps taken in response to the recommendations.

Response to Restraints and Isolation at Jack Hulland Elementary School (JHES)

On November 23, 2021, YCAO launched a systemic review regarding YG's response to allegations of abusive restraints and confinement at JHES. We notified the departments of Education, Health and Social Services, and Justice and requested information about communication, investigation and therapeutic support for students, families and educators.

The objective of our systemic review is to ensure a coordinated response by Yukon Government that supports children and their families in recovering from the harm caused by the alleged practices at JHES, and that this response serves to uphold the rights of children and youth.

In 2021-22, YCAO has focused on the individual advocacy needs of affected students and their families.



Children have a right to safety, therapeutic support and a school program that helps them reach their full potential.

A CHILD RIGHTS REVIEW OF AMENDMENTS TO THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT

Given the long lasting impacts of harmful government policies and YCAO's ongoing extensive involvement with children and youth receiving services within the *Child and Family Services Act*, we find it essential that a child's rights lens is formally applied to legislative amendments.

5 things to know about YCAO's child rights review of the CFSA:

- The Yukon *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) was reviewed by a Minister's Advisory committee in 2018/19. The committee released a report titled *Embracing the Children of Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*.
- On May 5, 2021, after numerous requests for updates on amendments to the CFSA, YCAO notified the Minister of Health and Social Services of YCAO's intention to conduct a review to ensure that a Child Rights Impact Assessment is applied. YCAO requested records from YG to conduct the review but they were not provided.



Governments are obligated to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

- In collaboration with the Council of Yukon First Nations and representatives from Yukon First Nation governments, Health and Social Services prepared Bill 11 An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act.
- After further requests, Health and Social Services provided a copy of Bill 11 to YCAO on Feb 2, 2022. YCAO then conducted a formal Child Rights Impact Assessment with recommendations that would ensure children's rights were fully implemented.
- Bill 11 was tabled on March 10, 2022 and YCAO's Child Rights Impact Assessment was tabled on March 11, 2022. The Legislative Assembly discussed and debated YCAO's assessment, the Bill passed on March 31, 2022 without amendments. The Minister of Health and Social Services committed to inviting YCAO to participate as an observer on the CFSA Implementation Working Group where policies related to the amendments will be developed in collaboration with First Nations governments.



ROVANCEO

What does CRIA stand for?







TRIVIA

Name the 4 guiding principles of the *United*Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



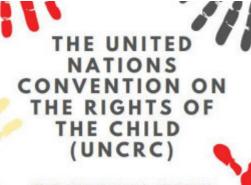
Photo: archbould.com

CHILO RIGHTS IMPRCT RSSESSMENTS

A Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) is a tool for translating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the child's best interests into policy and practice to:

- Improve public policy and contribute to better outcomes for children
- Ensure potential impacts to children are predicted, monitored and mitigated
- Consider short-term and longterm effects of policy on children
- Apply research and evidence to analysis of decisions
- Emphasize children's participation in decision-making
- Provide an efficient process to verify that governments are meeting obligations to uphold children's rights

The YCAO contends that if a child rights lens was proactively applied to services and programs, there would be improved outcomes for children and less of a need to advocate for children's rights and views to be upheld. It recognizes children as holders of broad-based rights and agency rather than passive recipients of adult actions.



THE UNCRC IS A HUMAN
RIGHTS TREATY THAT
SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS. CHILDREN HAVE THE
SAME RIGHTS AS ADULTS,
WITH A FEW DIFFERENCES
BECAUSE OF THEIR
POTENTIAL VULNERABILITY



The Yukon CRIA working group is developing a CRIA toolkit with resources, a primer, and a policy assessment tool specific for the Yukon.



COMMUNITIES BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES (CBYF)

The Communities Building Youth Futures (CYBF) project is a collective of youth-serving organizations and community groups working together to improve education, mental health, and career outcomes for Yukon youth. YCAO is proud to be part of this collective empowering young leaders in the Yukon community.

This year, CBYF organized the 2022 Youth Summit (taking over from the Annual Town Hall put on by Youth of Today Society) to bring together youth from across the Yukon on a multimedia virtual platform. Over five days in April, attendees came together along with territorial leaders including KDFN Chief Doris Bill, CYFN Grand Chief Peter Johnston, and Yukon Legislative Assembly Speaker Jeremy Harper to discuss pressing issues of relevance for young people such as climate change, mental wellness, and education. Amidst the serious conversations, there were definitely a lot of laughs, performances from young Yukon artists, and great prizes too!



Photo: Shakat Media

L-R: Lindsay Cornell, Jeremy Harper, Jessie Dawson, Linda Benoit

Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF):

- Receives funding and support from Tamarack Institute and Employment and Social Development Canada
- · Is developing a Yukon Youth Strategy
- Uses a Collective Impact approach to target barriers for transitioning from high school into careers
- Is made up of 12 core organizations, plus many more involved peripherally
- Has three working Action Teams on Mental Wellness, Individualized Learning, and Career Inclusion
- Supports YCAO with funding for projects related to CBYF goals (such as the School Attendance Review)
- Hosts a Youth Network Hub in partnership with Shakat Journal
- Questions can be directed to the CBYF Manager, Maxime Crawford-Holland (maxime@yukonyouth.com)



When is National Child Day?







YOUTH ENGRGEMENT

"Helping youth of today and setting them up to be the next generation of leaders is very important to me."

~ Youth

Child and Youth Advocate Act Youth Advisors

The YCAO is governed by the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* (CYAA), which is seven years overdue for a review. To lead the process of reviewing the Act, engaging community stakeholders, and drafting proposed act amendments, the YCAO has convened a youth working group to take the lead on making sure youth voice is foundational to all aspects of the review. Cohort 1 of the working group (made up of Abeer Ahmad, Samreen Ahmad, Ashley Cummings, and Yebin Park) completed a critical analysis of

the current CYAA and drafted a child-friendly version of the Act. Cohort 2 (made up of Abeer Ahmad, Samreen Ahmad, Victoria Holmes, and Chantai Minet) discussed youth stakeholder engagement strategies and community outreach, provided direction for project branding, and participated in intensive group-building work. These youth were recognized in the Legislative Assembly on National Child Day in November 2021. The youth advisors and YCAO will submit recommendations the Member Services Board of the Legislative Assembly in 2023.

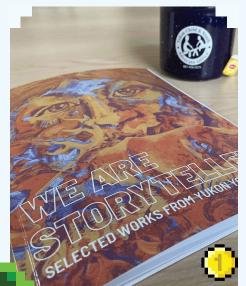
Storytellers Book

Telling the story of children's rights means not just focusing on challenges facing young people, but equally (if not more so) celebrating their creativity and amplifying their voices! This year YCAO compiled the works of 18 talented youth artists in photography, painting, poetry, beading, and more from across the territory for the release of We Are Storytellers: Selected Works from Yukon Youth Artists, in the summer of 2022.

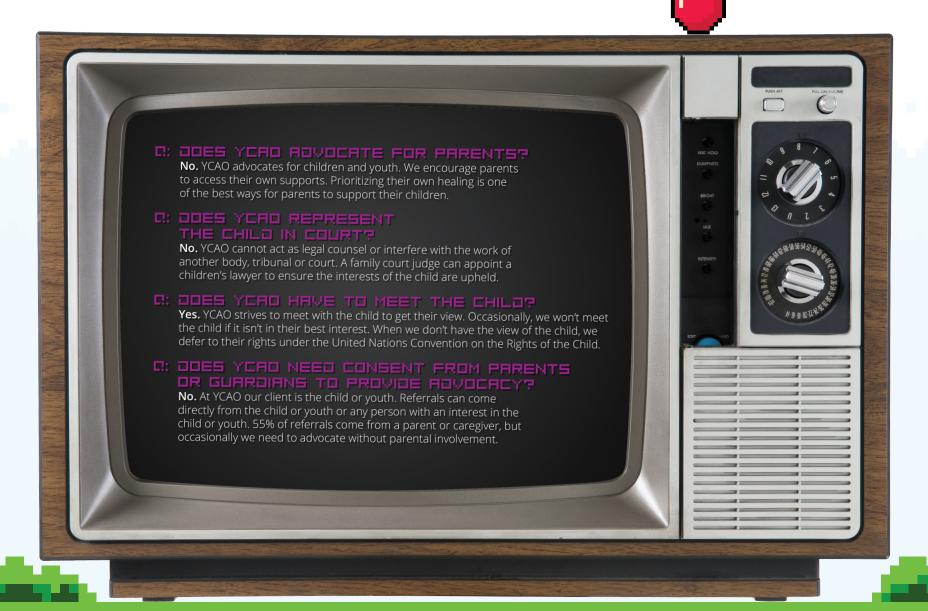
There are no words to describe the honour we feel in sharing these stories.







FRECUENTLY ASKED CUESTIONS (FAC'S)



GRMES





Find the following words in the puzzle. Words are hidden $\Rightarrow \psi$ and \mathbf{u} .

ADVOCACY
CHILD
PARTICIPATION
CRIA
PLAY
DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION
EMPOWERMENT
PROVISION
HEALTH
PARTICIPATION
PROMOTION
PROTECTION
PROVISION

SAFETY UNCRC VOICE YOUTH











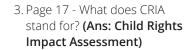
TRIVIA & GAME ANSWERS



- 1. Page 6 How many years has YCAO been in operation? (Ans: 12 years)
- 2. Page 8 How many Articles are in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child? (Ans: 54)
- 3. Page 11 Name three of the six
 Areas of Concern identified in YCAO's
 Review on School Attendance in the
 Yukon: What Is, What Could be. (Ans:
 Educational Supports, Behavioural
 Supports, Personal Factors,
 Mental Health & Trauma, Safety in
 Schools, or Belonging & Culture)
- 4. Page 13 On what date did YCAO reach 1000 issues resolved? (Ans: January 25th, 2022)
- 5. Page 19 When is National Child Day? (Ans: November 20th)

Difficulty Level: Advanced

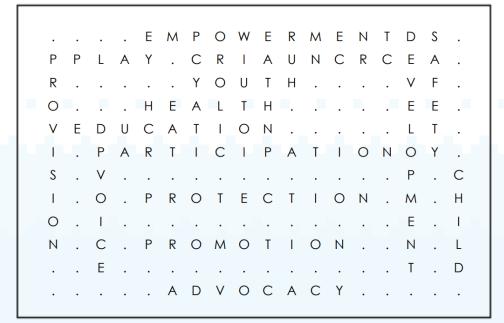
- 1. Page 10 True or False, YCAO can represent a child in court? (Ans: False)
- Page 14 Name two of the youthserving organizations that are Executive partners involved with Communities Building Youth Futures. (Ans: YCAO, BYTE, KDFN youth advisory council, YOTS, BGC)



4. Page 18 - Name the 4 guiding principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Ans: Right to non-discrimination in the provision and exercise of all Convention rights - Article 2; Right to adherence to the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children - Article 3; Right to life, and maximum possible wsurvival and development - Article 6; Right to express views freely and have those views respected in all matters affecting children - Article 12).



To Level Up go to: ycao.ca/public-education



Word directions and start points are formatted: (Direction, X, Y)

ADVOCACY (E,6,12) CHILD (\$,18,7) CRIA (E,7,2) DEVELOPMENT (\$,16,1) EDUCATION (E,2,5) EMPOWERMENT (E,5,1) HEALTH (E,5,4)
PARTICIPATION (E,3,6)
PLAY (E,2,2)
PROMOTION (E,5,10)
PROTECTION (E,5,8)
PROVISION (S,1,2)

SAFETY (\$,17,1) UNCRC (E,11,2) VOICE (\$,3,7) YOUTH (E,7,3)









