

Young people Have a Voice



Photo: C. Archbould



2014
Annual Report

Child and Youth Advocate Message

Against the backdrop of mega-serious world events (Ebola and ISIS) that the evening news drops onto our laps on a daily basis, the plight of children around the world must not go unnoticed.

From the plight of the two hundred young girls kidnapped in broad daylight from a school in Nigeria to the body of a young aboriginal girl found floating in the Red River to the almost-forgotten youth who have no choice but to be raised in Group Home after Group Home, there remains one very important question; "Are we doing our absolute best to help the most vulnerable children in our society?"

The generation of our youth today are exposed to and beleaguered with problems that past generations could never have imagined. Most of those problems are promoted by the digitally-cultured and internet-driven minds that are impacted by such maladies as, cyber-bullying, sex-texting and information-sharing that is unprecedented. Yet, no matter how computerized and digitally far-advanced we become as human beings in an ever changing world, there will never be a replacement for a caring heart that

is real. Children of neglect have a finely-tuned intuition that picks-up-on and clings to any shred of genuine love it comes in contact with. You can call me biased (and I'm OK with that), but actions speak for themselves and it is with pride that I can openly affirm that the office of the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate has thus far, and always will, continue to strive to incorporate into our daily work ethic, actions that are derived from caring hearts that are real.

There has been a lot accomplished in the past year yet there is still a great deal of work that needs to be accomplished in the lives of all Yukon youth. The future goals of the Child and Youth Advocate office include: **Signing an Advocate/Education Protocol; Establishing Rights Respecting Schools in the Yukon; Presenting in every Yukon community a workshop titled; "A Gathering to Promote and Protect Yukon Youth"** which invites community members-at-large and professionals to understand the many roles of the Child Advocate and how the Child and Family Services Act works in its mandate to protect children and how confidentiality is protected when reporting abuse. This workshop also covers many other

topics involving children. As well, we are aiming to: **Develop a strategy which incorporates the Rights of children directly into government policies using the CRIA (Child Rights Impact Assessment) Model.** Wherever CRIA has been implemented in other Canadian jurisdictions the results clearly stand out as being very positive and empowering for youth and the professionals who engage them. And finally the Deputy Child Advocate and myself, **will undergo extensive training enabling us to effectively conduct Reviews as outlined in our YCAA Legislation.** We look forward to another successful and rewarding year of supporting, informing, advising, and assisting all Yukon children and youth to receive the best government services they are entitled to.

Andrew Nieman



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Examples of Successful Advocacy

Scenario #1 A young person phoned the Child and Youth Advocate office from the Young Offender's Facility and stated he was about to be sent to a Treatment Centre outside of the Yukon without his consent. The young man was presenting suicidal ideation. He wanted to know if he had any rights and if so, what are those rights? The Child Advocate met with the young man in private and explained that as a young person under nineteen years of age who was receiving a government service, he most definitely had rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Once the youth learned that his rights were not being violated, he said he felt better and it was easier for him to make the transition and go into treatment.



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Scenario #2 A distraught mother met with the Child and Youth Advocate to explain that she felt her daughter was being treated very disrespectfully at school by a certain Teacher. She stated that her daughter did not feel safe at the school as a result and did not want to attend. The Advocate met in private with the daughter to hear her side of the allegation. The Advocate also met with the District School Superintendent, the Principal and the Teacher. Using an Informal Dispute Resolution process, the situation was resolved with the student feeling safe and respected at the school once all the parties involved came to a mutual agreement. The student returned to school.



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Who we are:

Yukon Child and Youth Advocate
Andy Nieman

Deputy Child and Youth Advocate
Bengie Clethero

Office Administrator
Tina Dickson

(See complete bios
at www.ycao.ca)

What we do

The Advocate Office will support, assist, inform and advise children and youth with respect to government services including:

- > providing information and advice related to how to effectively access government services and any process for review of decisions respecting the service;
- > working with the child or youth to ensure that their views and preferences are heard and considered;
- > promoting the rights and interests of the child or youth to be safe, healthy, educated and heard;

How we do it

Based on the Advocate's initial assessment their role may include providing advice, coaching on effective self-advocacy, requesting and/or attending planning meetings and if required, advocating directly on behalf of the child or youth.

- > Anyone can contact the Advocate Office on behalf of a child or youth.
- > Children and youth are encouraged to contact the Advocate Office (when possible) on their own or with someone's assistance.

What the Advocate's Office doesn't do:

- > Provide child protection services, financial assistance or counselling.
- > Speak for children and youth in a court of law
- > Take action or interfere with a tribunal or court process
- > Represent children and youth in custody matters.
- > Change custody and access arrangements.

Confidentiality

All Child and Youth Advocate staff must maintain confidentiality in respect of all matters that come to their knowledge in the exercise of powers and the performance of functions and duties under the Act. This means that the Advocate and all other staff must not divulge to anyone information on confidential matters regarding their responsibilities related to their legislatively mandated duties and functions. The Advocate must ensure that all information in their control and custody is secure and appropriately protected.

Case numbers In 2014

Basic Advocacy – 34
Comprehensive Advocacy – 3
Systemic Advocacy – 2
Information and Referrals – 63
Total Cases for 2013 – 102

Contact us:

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