

ADVOCACY IN BLOOM



2017/2018 ANNUAL REPORT
YUKON CHILD & YOUTH ADVOCATE OFFICE



Photo: archbould.com



CONTACT US

Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office (YCAO)

Phone: (867) 456-5575
Toll Free: 1-800-661-0408 ext. 5575
Fax: (867) 456-5574
Website: www.ycao.ca

**Office Address (*across the street from
the Yukon Government building*):**
2070 2nd Avenue, Unit # 19,
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1B1

 /Yukon-Child-Youth-Advocate-Office



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

October 1, 2018

The Honourable Nils Clarke
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Box 2703,
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 2C6

Re: Child and Youth Advocate Office 2017-2018 Annual Report

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Under my authority as set out in Section 24 of Child and Youth Advocate Act, I am pleased to present you with our 2017-2018 Annual report – Advocacy in Bloom. This document reports on the activities of the office during the period April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018.

With respect,

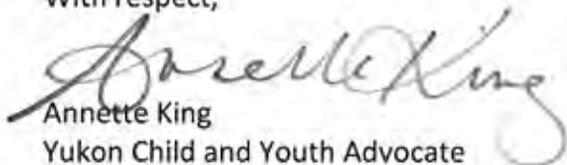

Annette King
Yukon Child and Youth Advocate



Photo: archbould.com



STRENGTHENING ROOTS FOR FLOURISHING YOUTH

We are here to help young people be heard. By nurturing the roots of society, we are building our next generation of leaders. Child and youth advocacy is not only about speaking on behalf of children and youth; we are also striving to build capacity in young people to understand their rights so that they can advocate for themselves.

With each advocacy issue that comes to the YCAO, we make every effort to meet the young person, help the young person share their view with the government decision makers and look for child rights focused resolutions.

With our advocacy processes clarified we have noticed some improvement in government departments' willingness to address advocacy issues for children and youth. Although we have experienced fewer hurdles in accessing information and promoting child rights, we still consistently see situations where children and youth are not meaningfully considered in the process. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, we are not getting child rights centred outcomes for children and youth. There are often competing interests between governments, programs and families, with the interests of the child being overlooked without someone

speaking up for them. We are here to make sure there is another seat at the table when decisions are being made about children and youth by government; the seat for the child.

The experience of being heard can empower a child or youth. Many of the children and youth we work with have experienced disempowerment, trauma and uncertainty throughout their lives. Engaging a young person provides them with a sense of control, which can lead to improvements in their overall well-being.

Over the last few years, YCAO has experienced a steady increase in the number of advocacy issues referred to us, with the most significant increase in the last year. Most issues are brought to us by concerned adults. Even with the large increase in advocacy issues brought to our attention, we are concerned that the children and



DID YOU KNOW?

YCAO is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly and not part of a government department.

WHO WE ARE

Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate

Bengie Clethero, Deputy Child and Youth Advocate

Annie Blake, Admin/ Communications Assistant

youth who need us most do not have access to us.

We strive to maintain high standards for our advocacy and are working to implement the existing *Child and Youth Advocate Act* to its fullest extent to hold government departments accountable in upholding the needs and rights of children and youth.

We are encouraged by recent structural changes in Yukon government, such as:

- cooperation between federal, provincial, territorial, and First Nation governments to address the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in care.
- restructuring of mental wellness services and hubs
- policy changes acknowledging gender diversity
- integration of TRC into Education curriculum
- increased financial support for families caring for extended family members
- focusing on homelessness and housing initiatives

We are optimistic that positive working relationships with departments will reduce some of the barriers we have previously experienced.

However, we are constantly monitoring how these changes make tangible improvements in the experiences of children and youth.

In addition to the ongoing focus of our primary role, individual advocacy, over the next year the YCAO will focus on:

- increasing our systemic advocacy response to issues, starting with a formal review of the experiences of children and youth living in group homes
- providing input to the *Child and Family Services Act* review
- following up on resolutions for individual advocacy issues that are referred to the office
- celebrating youth leadership with the Jays Care Foundation Yukon Rookie League tournament
- providing input to Member Services Board for a review of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*



Annette King,
Child and Youth Advocate

YCAO NEW CHILD/YOUTH FILES BY FISCAL YEAR

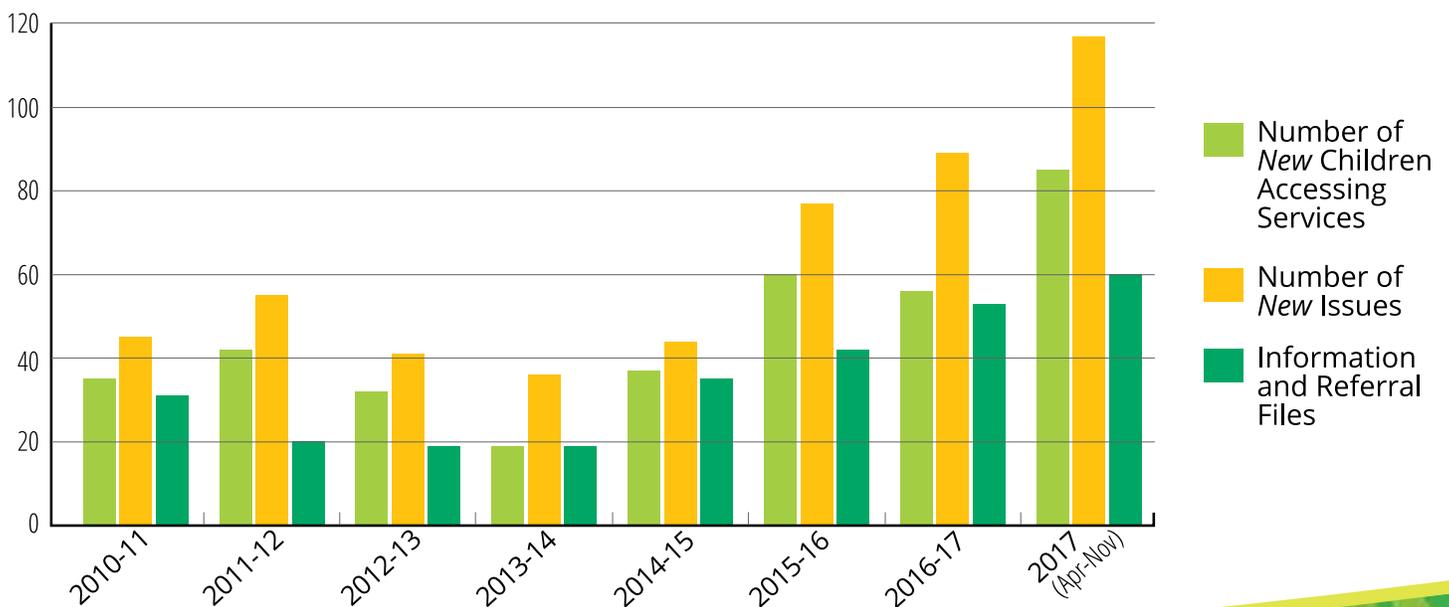




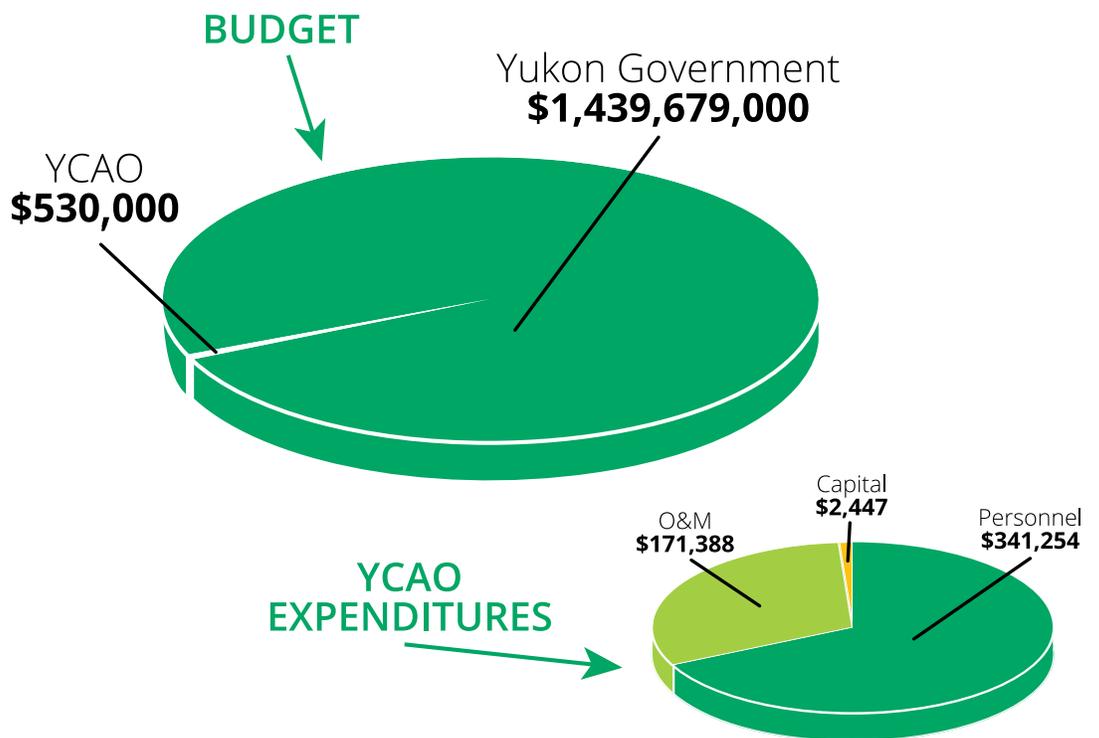
Photo: archbould.com



FINANCIAL STATS

YCAO is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly and submits an annual budget to Members' Services Board, an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly, for approval.

2017-18 Budget and Expenditures



DID YOU KNOW?

YCAO has not had an increase in staff since opening the office in 2010.



CASE LOAD STATS



HOW MANY CHILDREN/YOUTH ACCESSED YCAO THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

Total # of children accessing YCAO in 2017-2018	154
# of new children accessing YCAO in 2017-2018	85
# of children continuing to access YCAO from previous years	69 (carried over)

HOW MANY ADVOCACY ISSUES DID YCAO RESPOND TO THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

Total # of advocacy issues addressed in 2017-2018	204
# of new advocacy issues in 2017-2018	117
# of advocacy issues continuing from previous years	87 (carried over)
# of information/referrals received in 2017-2018	60

WHERE ARE THE ADVOCACY ISSUES ?

Whitehorse	150
Other Communities	54

HOW MANY ADVOCACY ISSUES WERE FOR FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN/YOUTH?

Yukon First Nations	138
Indigenous (outside of Yukon)	29
Non-First Nations	26
Unknown	11



WHO REFERRED THE ADVOCACY ISSUES?

Parent/caregiver/family member	105
Professional	71
Youth (Over 12)	17
Other	7
Children (Under 12)	4



WHICH YUKON GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAD THE MOST ADVOCACY ISSUES?

Family and Children's Services (Whitehorse)	120
Education	46
Regional Services (communities)	44
MWSUS (MHS,CATS,ADS)	39
WGH/Insured Health	11
Youth Justice	11
ISYY	8
Yukon Housing Corporation	2

Note: Some issues have more than one designated service involved.



Photo: Bengie Clethero



DID YOU KNOW?

The average # of new advocacy issues from 2010-2017 was **72** while in 2017-18, YCAO had **117** new advocacy issues.



Photo: archbould.com



ADVOCACY CASE SCENARIOS

Case Scenario:

Kelly, 14 years old, was medivaced from a rural community to Whitehorse General Hospital after a suicide attempt. The Advocate met with Kelly at the hospital and informed Kelly of the role of the office (YCAO). Kelly's view is that going home is not an option. Kelly also shares that seeing friends is the only reason to go to school. Kelly wants to talk to someone that will listen so YCAO supports Kelly's voice.

- Advocacy Issue(s):**
1. Access to mental health treatment;
 2. Assessment of family placement;
 3. Access to educational supports;
 4. Access to family support.

Advocacy Action: YCAO notified YG Regional Social Services of a

new advocacy issue to ensure Kelly's returning home has positive results. This included requesting an assessment of the home, placement plan and family's ability to support education and mental wellness. YCAO also notified Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and requested that a counsellor engage with the youth while in Hospital.

Resolution: A counsellor visited Kelly in Hospital. The YG social worker determined the home was safe for Kelly to return, even though Kelly refused this option. The family stated that they don't know what to do to support Kelly's high risk behaviours.

Note: this issue demonstrates system gaps between the *Child and Family Services Act* and the *Mental Health Act*.

DID YOU KNOW?

UNCRC Article 12:
Respect for the view of the child.

UNCRC Article 28:
Right to an education.

CHILD VIEW:

I don't want to go home



I wish there was someone that would listen to me



I am worried about getting behind in school and not being in touch with my friends



I am willing to see a counsellor



Case Scenario:

Reese is a 13 year-old First Nations youth living with a great Aunt. Two years earlier, Family and Children's Services (FCS) in Whitehorse assessed Reese's parents to be at risk. Out of home care was required and Reese and siblings move in with their great Aunt. Reese does not attend school and great Aunt is struggling, financially and practically, to support the children.

Advocacy Issue(s): 1. Access to family supports, including: a) therapeutic supports, b) financial supports to improve standard of living, c) engagement in school and d) other community activities.

Advocacy Action: YCAO notifies FCS and the First Nation of the advocacy issues. YCAO meets with Reese and siblings who said they don't know what is going on but would like to keep staying with "Auntie".

Resolution: FCS met with the family and set up a support

agreement - Extended Family Care Agreement (EFCA), for the great Aunt. FCS and the First Nation:

- provided access to a therapist to address original concerns of being separated from their parents,
- provided additional supports to access community groups,
- set up respite every second weekend and opportunities to engage with other extended family members
- YCAO and Reese met with the school administrator to re-engage Reese and develop an education plan to suit Reese's specific educational goals and needs.

**note: specific details may be changed to protect the identity of the children and youth accessing supports from YCAO.

DID YOU KNOW?

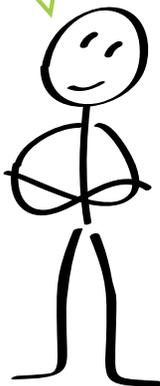
UNCRC Article 25:
Review of treatment in care.

UNCRC Article 27:
Adequate standard of living.

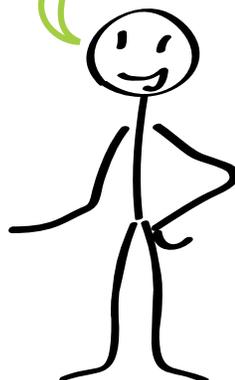
UNDRIP Article 14 (2):
Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination

CHILD
VIEW:

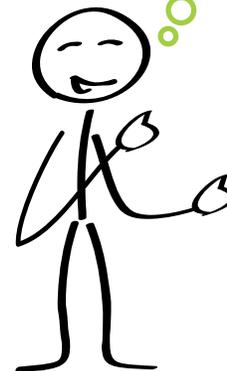
Is it my fault we don't live at home?



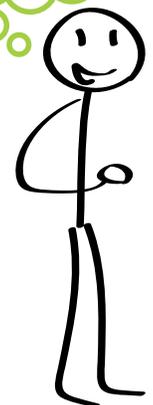
I don't know if I have a social worker.



I don't know how long I'm going to live here.



Nobody likes me at school.





WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I CALL THE OFFICE?

We ask for your personal info (name, date of birth, etc)

We ask what the issue or question is



We try to find out what help you need or want

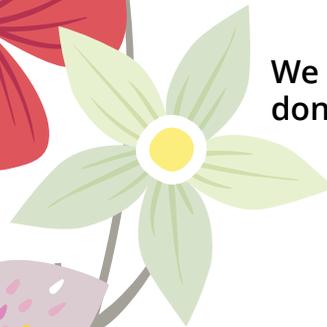
We see if other people are involved



We ask what you've done for yourself so far



We sort out how our office can help



We take action in making sure you get what you need, your voice is heard and your rights are upheld



DID YOU KNOW?

We take your privacy seriously. YCAO staff must take an oath of confidentiality (s. 9 *Child and Youth Advocate Act*)



SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

Section 12 (1) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* enables the Advocate to undertake systemic review of issues brought to YCAO's attention through individual advocacy work, that raise a substantial question of public interest. The Advocate may review and provide advice regarding issues to the relevant department.

Over the last few years, YCAO has streamlined individual advocacy processes (the primary role of YCAO). With these foundational processes established, YCAO is ready to implement systemic advocacy. Over eight years, 783 issues have been brought to YCAO; several systemic themes have emerged. We are most concerned about the following:

- over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in the child welfare system

- case planning and practical supports for children and youth living in care and placements away from their parents.
- youth transitioning out of care – we are working with a young adult who grew up in care to produce a video about ageing out
- mental wellness supports for families
- school attendance and completion
- considerations and supports for biological fathers as placements
- meaningful participation and consideration of youth voice in decision making



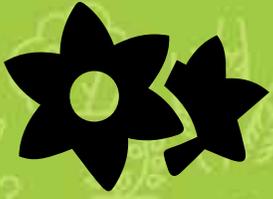
Photo: Charlie Hawes



DID YOU KNOW?

In Jan 2018, YCAO, along with other Child Advocates in Canada, attended the “emergency meeting” in Ottawa to reform child welfare in Canada, hosted by Indigenous Services Canada.





DID YOU KNOW?

Yukon's *Child and Family Services Act* is currently under review. This is an opportunity to create changes in legislation to better support children and their families.

United Nations adopted the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007. The YCAO uses UNDRIP as a guiding document.

Minority or indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion. (UNCRC Article 30)

Indigenous Child Welfare

**"BE THE FIRST TO RAISE
A GENERATION OF CHILDREN
WHO DON'T HAVE TO
RECOVER FROM THEIR
CHILDHOODS"**

— DR. CINDY BLACKSTOCK

Too many Indigenous children have experienced harm for generations. At YCAO we see the harm continuing today. Protection of children needs to be a priority for our territory and child welfare interventions need to focus on safety and support at family and community levels. We don't want to see children going into care but it is also not enough to simply leave children in harmful situations. Healing offered in a wide variety of approaches can enhance community capacity to care for their children. Parents, grandparents and other caregivers need to be empowered to raise children safely with the supports needed to thrive.

YCAO is inspired by the recent actions of the Council of Yukon First Nations and several Yukon First Nations have taken to

address the care for their children; they are empowering youth and future generations. YCAO tries to participate whenever possible.

YCAO believes that all child welfare interventions need to be child-rights focused acts of reconciliation that highlight the voices of young people. All Canadians need to learn about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to Action and find a way to implement them.

As a result of the Emergency Meeting in Ottawa, the Government of Canada came up with a six point plan to address Indigenous child welfare:

Canada's 6 point plan:

- Implement Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and reform child and family services
- Focus on prevention and early intervention
- Support communities to draw down jurisdiction for child welfare
- Accelerate the work of trilateral and technical tables in place
- Support Inuit and Metis Nation leadership to advance culturally-appropriate reform
- Develop a data and report strategy with provinces, territories and Indigenous partners

Systemic review of the experiences of children and youth in group homes

What:

YCAO will examine services and supports provided to Yukon children living in group homes. The Office will advocate for system improvements that will enhance the overall safety and well-being of children and youth in government care.

Who:

The review will focus on the experiences of children and youth living in group care, over a three year period, from April 2015 to March 2018.

When:

YCAO's systemic review of the experiences of children and youth living in group homes will be complete by March 2019. The report will be made public while maintaining the privacy rights of children and youth involved.

How:

- Review of relevant YCAO advocacy issues and resolutions
- Personal interviews with children and youth from group homes
- Review of records and reports
- Discussions with First Nation government officials
- Interviews with group home staff, social workers and family members of youth in group care

Why:

Children who cannot live with their parents have a right to be placed by competent authorities for the purposes of care, protection and treatment and to have their living situation and supports reviewed regularly (UNCRC, 25). Given the over-representation of First Nation's children living in group care, YCAO's analysis and recommendations will acknowledge the history of care for First Nations' children.

YCAO encourages anyone concerned about children and youth living in group care to contact the office.



DID YOU KNOW?

A person must not discharge, suspend, discipline, penalize or otherwise discriminate against another person because the other person has given information to the Advocate or has otherwise assisted the Advocate (s. 27 *Child and Youth Advocate Act*).

Article 16 UNCRC:

Children have a right to privacy. Their personal information should be protected.





In September 2017, YCAO co-hosted the CCCYA biennial conference with the Alberta Child and Youth Advocate Office in Banff Alberta

Photo: Charlie Hawes

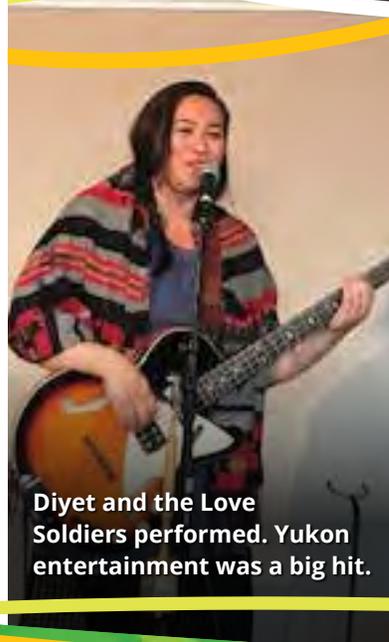


DID YOU KNOW?

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates is an association of government-appointed children's advocates from nine provinces and two territories.



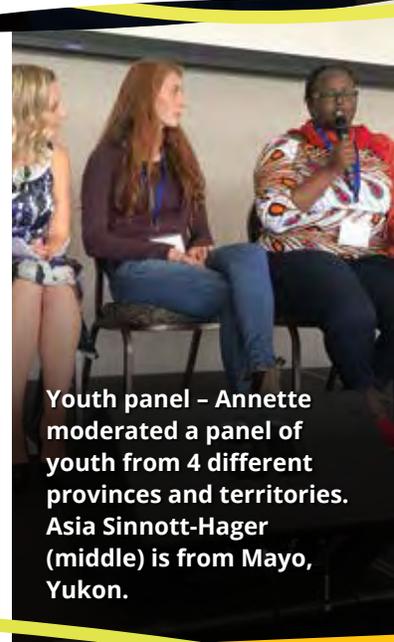
Bengie and Annette with Dr. Marie Wilson (keynote speaker) and Del Graff (Alberta Advocate). Dr. Wilson inspired the group to continue efforts on promoting implementation of the TRC Calls to Action.



Diyet and the Love Soldiers performed. Yukon entertainment was a big hit.



Dr. Ziba a keynote speaker inspiring advocates about child rights nationally and internationally.



Youth panel - Annette moderated a panel of youth from 4 different provinces and territories. Asia Sinnott-Hager (middle) is from Mayo, Yukon.



LEGISLATIVE REVIEWS

Encouraging child rights focused policies

YCAO's vision is to have all government legislations and policies reflect children's rights.

A Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) is a formal tool for assessing the impact of a policy, law, program or decision on children. The intention is to understand how the impacts will contribute or undermine fulfillment of children's rights and well-being in the short and long term.

CRIA can address systemic risk factors that can have life-long impacts on children.

In 2017-18, YCAO provided input into:

- *Vital Statistics Act*
- *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*
- *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*

YCAO is preparing a submission for the current review of the *Child and Family Services Act* and upcoming review of the *Coroners Act*.

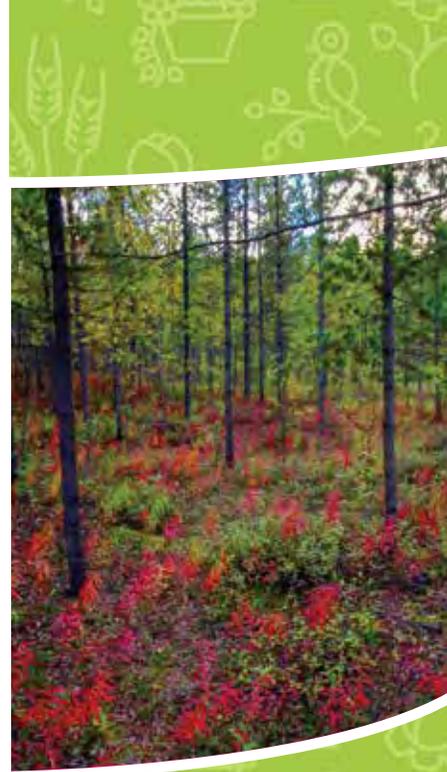


Photo: Charlie Hawes



DID YOU KNOW?

Within five years of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* coming into force, the Members Services' Board must establish a process for review of the Act (s. 30)

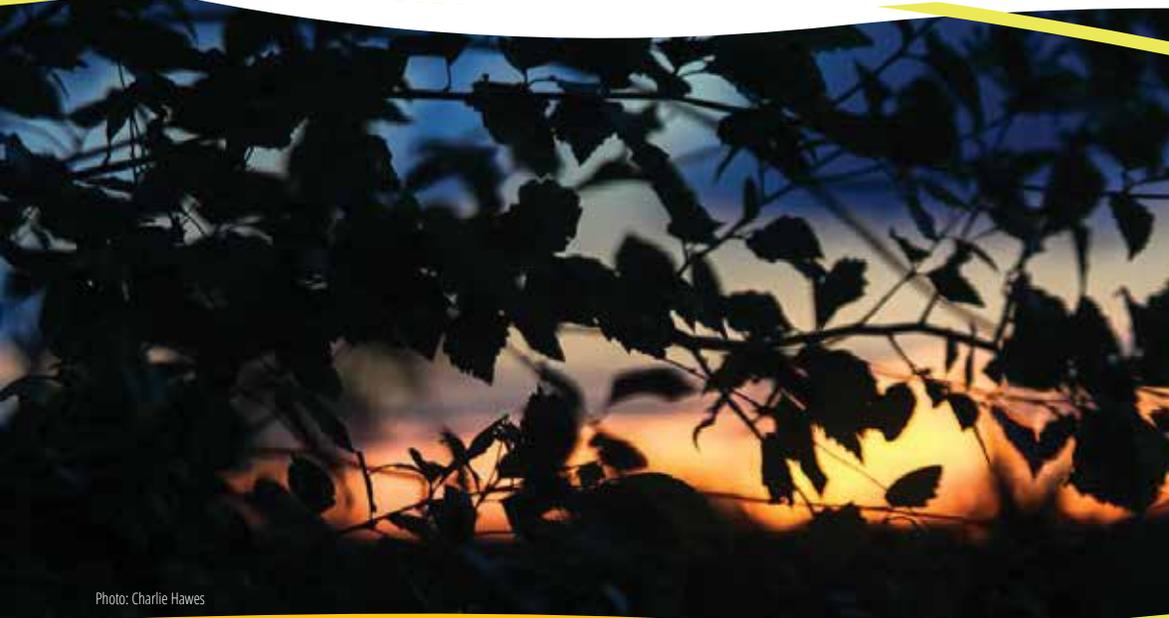


Photo: Charlie Hawes



DID YOU KNOW?

- During National Family Week (October), YCAO annually hosts a Family Swim and Pizza at the Canada Games Centre
- On National Child Day (November 20), YCAO hosts an annual Open House
- This year, YCAO has contracted with Shakat to support YCAO communications and create greater access to advocacy for children and youth.

shakat



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

YCAO attended the Millennial Town Hall hosted by youth and young adults of Shakat and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. It was inspiring to hear young people leading and speaking up.

We are encouraged to hear the Premier state that “youth are our greatest resource!”.

We respect the elected officials for taking the time to listen to learn about what young people are concerned about and giving heartfelt answers to their challenging questions.

The issues raised by the youth at the Town Hall resonated for YCAO

as they are similar issues we hear when providing advocacy. We heard about children’s rights to education, culture, recreation, housing and protection from abuse and exploitation.

YCAO is looking forward to hearing about the progress Yukon Government has made in responding to the concerns raised by the young people at the Town Hall.

YCAO is following up with Shakat to support a 2019 Town Hall.



Photo: Shakat

Mayor Dan Curtis, Chief Kristina Kane, Premier Sandy Silver, Chief Doris Bill, and Grand Chief Peter Johnston



Madison McKenna interviewing Premier Sandy Silver



The Child and Youth Advocate office participated in the National Day of Broadcast, which was aired on CHON FM on Nov. 20th. This project was a partnership with Child and Youth Advocate Offices across Canada and the National Community Radio Association, through Ryerson University. The voices and stories of young people were aired on non-profit community radio stations across the nation,

and Chon FM locally. Interviews were also featured in the Senate Chamber on Nov. 22nd 2017.

Yukon children and youth participated in this project through volunteer interviews that focused on the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.



DID YOU KNOW?

YCAO hired Billie-Janine Richard as a Youth Engagement Assistant to assist with public education and to liaise YCAO with youth organizations.



Billie-Janine Richard interviewing Grand Chief Peter Johnston.



YCAO's 2017 open house was hosted on National Child Day. Young people hosted the event.



Nigel Charlie interviewing Deputy Child and Youth Advocate Bengie Clethero.



Molly Sam interviewing Yukon Commissioner Doug Phillips.



The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly recognized National Child Day with a tribute to the youth involved in the National Day of Broadcast and the YCAO Youth Advisors who developed the Yukon Rookie League Program.



DID YOU KNOW?

**National Child Day,
November 20th,**

is a day that marks the anniversary of Canada's commitment to upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



Yukon Rookie League – An Act of Reconciliation

YCAO partnered with the Jays Care Foundation, the charitable arm of the Toronto Blue Jays, to plan and deliver a reconciliation event featuring culture and baseball. The project was designed and led by First Nations youth ages 11-13. The youth advisors were active in designing the project by: contributing their ideas, working as a team and meeting with officials from governments and sports organizations.

With YCAO's support, Youth Advisors:

- attended 2017 CYFN General Assembly to hand deliver information about Yukon Rookie League to Yukon Chiefs
- attended information sharing sessions with: Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Sport Yukon, MP Larry Bagnell, Honourable Minister Streiker, Honourable Minister McPhee, CYFN Grand Chief Peter Johnston, Sport Yukon and Softball Yukon
- presented at the National Aboriginal Sport Circle banquet in October 2017.

Once the project was designed, YCAO reached out to all Yukon First Nations to attend the First Nation youth leadership training in 2017. YCAO then connected with all Yukon elementary schools to identify youth leaders to participate in the youth coaches training in February 2018.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Yukon Rookie League objectives included:

- Youth leadership
- Yukon youth learning about First Nations culture and history
- Children's rights incorporated into activities
- Yukon youth experiencing belonging, mastery, independence and generosity
- Developing ball skills
- Yukon youth implementing games in their communities
- Young people taking part in positive play



Meet our Advisors:



Nevaeh Webb is a citizen of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and resident of Kwanlin Dün. He attends Porter Creek High School. He is the youth coach for the Kwanlin Dün Rookie League team. Nevaeh loves all sports and has a smile on his face when playing.



Jennifer Tuton is a member of Tahltan Nation and a student of Vanier School. Jennifer enjoys playing sports and is a HUGE Blue Jays fan – need to know the score or line up of the last game? Just ask Jenny! Jennifer has the goal of becoming a sports commentator.



Nigel Charlie is a citizen of Teslin Tlingit Council. He advised the project and is one of the youth coaches for the Elijah Smith boys team. Nigel is strongly grounded in cultural traditions and he demonstrated strength in attending meetings and sharing his ideas with adult leaders.



Madison McKenna is a citizen of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. She is one of the youth coaches for the team from Jack Hulland School. Madison loves horses, her family and tries to get involved in as many things as possible.



DID YOU KNOW?

The YCAO Jays Care Foundation proposal is based on TRC, UNCRC, and the Hierarchy of youth engagement.





2nd Base:
Youth Coaches
Training-February
2018

3rd Base:
8 Yukon Rookie
League teams
practice for
tournament-
Spring 2018

1st Base:
First Nations Youth
Leadership training-
October 2017

Home plate:
Stay tuned for-Yukon Rookie League
Tournament and trip to Toronto!

In addition to YCAO's partnership with Jays Care Foundation, Yukon Rookie League was supported by the following organizations:



DID YOU KNOW?

Article 12:

Right to have views considered

Article 30:

Right to Culture

Article 31:

Right to Play

After the February Youth Coaches training with the Jays Care Foundation, eight teams led by youth began practicing. To be eligible for the celebratory tournament in June, they had to lead at least eight practices.

Teams include:

Beaver Creek

Boys and Girls Club/
Skookum Jim Friendship
Centre

Elijah Smith School - Girls

Elijah Smith School – Boys

Jack Hulland School

Kwanlin Dün Community

Old Crow

Teslin



The Right to Play within the Circle of Courage

YCAO uses the Circle of Courage as a guiding tool when working with young people. Through the Right to Play, and the work we've done through Jays Care Foundation, we've gained some examples of how children experience each portion of the Circle of Courage.

Generosity

Generosity was demonstrated by youth volunteering, sharing, encouraging teammates and supporting everyone regardless of their skill level.



Independence

Through Jays Care Foundation, young people were given opportunities to practice leadership. The youth coaches were in charge of practices, giving them a sense of independence.

Belonging

Belonging, through Jays Care Foundation, was built through being part of a team and being involved in decision making throughout the scheduled activities.

Mastery

Young people in Rookie League were able to improve their athletic skills through playing baseball.





10 WAYS YOU CAN NURTURE THE ROOTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

You can cultivate the development of children and youth of all ages by:

1. Encouraging them to join groups or clubs with other youth
2. Talking to them about their family
3. Learning about their interests and learning styles
4. Offering control in planning and decision making where possible
5. Talking about what to do in cases of emergency, knowing who to call or where to go
6. Putting them in charge of developmentally appropriate responsibilities
7. Turning off electronics in the home for scheduled times
8. Supporting relationships with other adults in their life
9. Acknowledging all types of emotions, even if they seem negative
10. Role modelling volunteering at a community event or potlatch

