

# ADVOCACY IN ACTION



## 2018/2019 ANNUAL REPORT

YUKON CHILD & YOUTH ADVOCATE OFFICE



Photo: archbould.com




## CONTACT US

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 /Yukon-Child-Youth-Advocate-Office



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October 2019

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

Re: Child and Youth Advocate Office 2018-19 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 the 2018-2019 Annual Report – Advocacy in Action. This document reports on the activities of the Child and Youth Advocate Office during the period of April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019.

I would be pleased to meet with you or Member Services Board for discussion or clarification.

With Respect,

Annette King,  
Yukon Child and Youth Advocate



Photo: archbould.com

## DID YOU KNOW?

In nine years of operation, the YCAO has addressed 673 advocacy issues for 442 Yukon children and youth.



# ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IMPROVES OUTCOMES

Most children in Canada have adults to protect them and provide for them. Sadly, some children don't have natural advocates and they need someone to stand up and be a voice for them.

At the Child and Youth Advocate Office (YCAO), we hear daily about situations where children's rights are not being upheld. This fiscal year has been our busiest yet. The volume and complexity of individual advocacy issues continues to rise, our systemic advocacy has moved into full swing and we continue to be active in public education and promotion of children's rights.

**All actions of YCAO are guided by the *Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Act*.**

**We are using the legislation to its fullest capacity and have identified areas that require amendment and enhancement.**

On our journey in advancing children's rights we are starting to see progress, yet there is still room for meaningful change. Over the last two years, our working relationships with Yukon Government departments have improved and we have noticed Yukon Government more frequently

including First Nations governments in case planning for children and youth.

We hope that as workers gain an understanding of children's rights and how their decisions impact children and youth, they will be more likely to support children and youth as active participants in their own lives.

YCAO continues to be a member of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA). We collectively work on issues of mutual concern and are dedicated to advancing the rights of children and youth throughout Canada.


When we take the concerns of young people seriously, we empower them to become contributing members of a safe and healthy society. Applying children's rights inspires hope. When we hear about children's distressing situations, it can be quite overwhelming but putting the issues in the context of children's rights helps clarify the actions that generate the best possible outcomes.

**Children and youth need to be valued. Placing time and resources into children and youth early on can prevent the costly outcomes of neglected and disengaged youth.**

Our goals for 2019-20 include:

- » pursuing child rights centered outcomes for the high number of individual advocacy issues that are brought to YCAO.
- » effectively addressing outstanding individual advocacy issues.
- » actively addressing systemic advocacy issues in order to decrease the gaps and delays in government response to these issues.

- » providing education on children's rights to service providers, policy makers and children and youth.
- » providing an updated submission to the Member Services Board regarding recommendations to amend the *Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Act*.



Annette King,  
Child and Youth Advocate

### YCAO NEW ADVOCACY ISSUES PER FISCAL YEAR

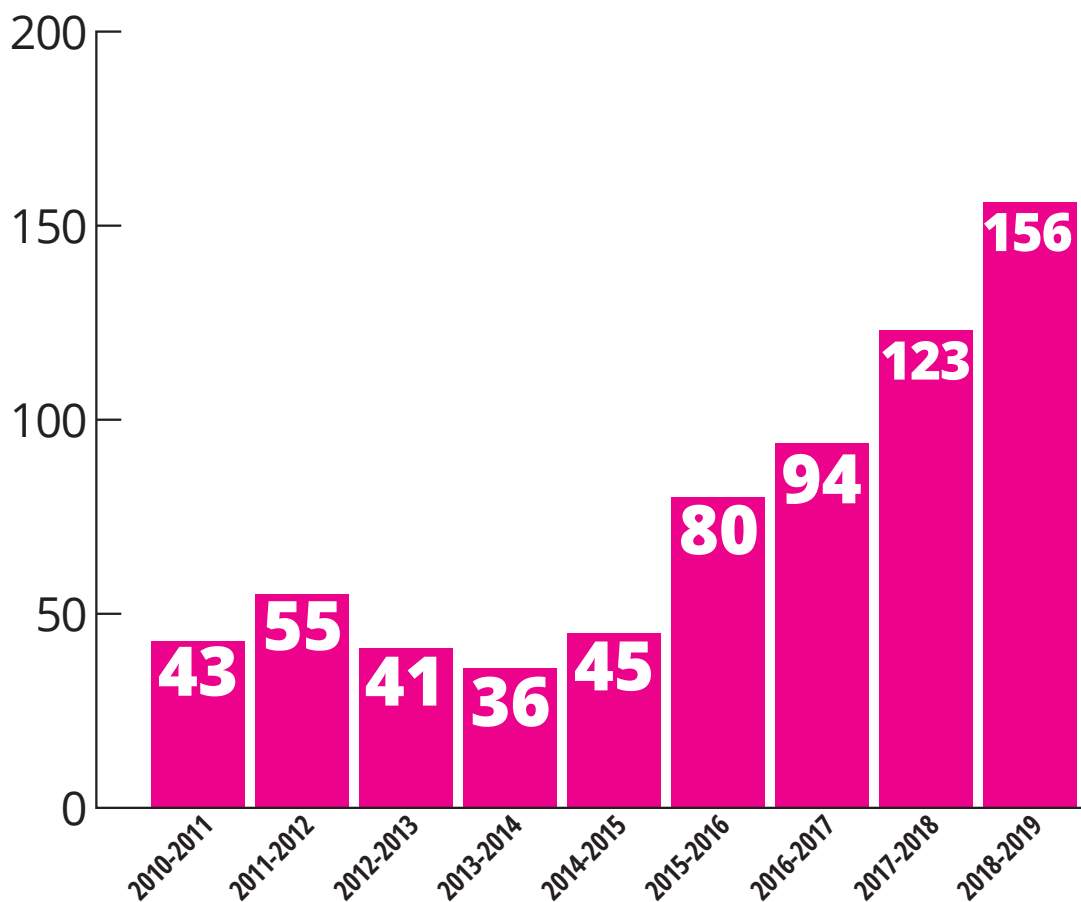




Photo: archbould.com



# FINANCIAL STATS

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

In 18-19 YCAO made a request to MSB for an increase in the core budget for additional staffing to address the high volume of individual and systemic advocacy issues.

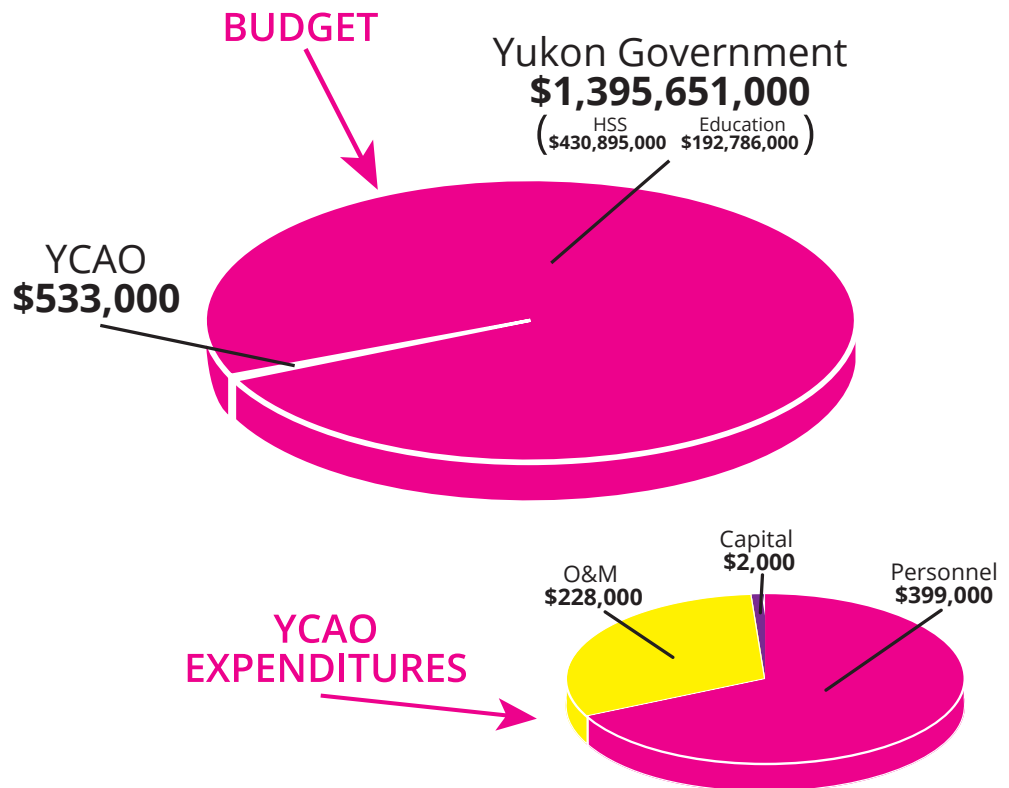
## DID YOU KNOW?

Jays Care Foundation provided funding to support Yukon Rookie League programming for 2017-18 and 2018-19.

## DID YOU KNOW?

YCAO accessed the YG Aboriginal Recruitment and Development Program to assist in funding a new position.

## 2018-19 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES





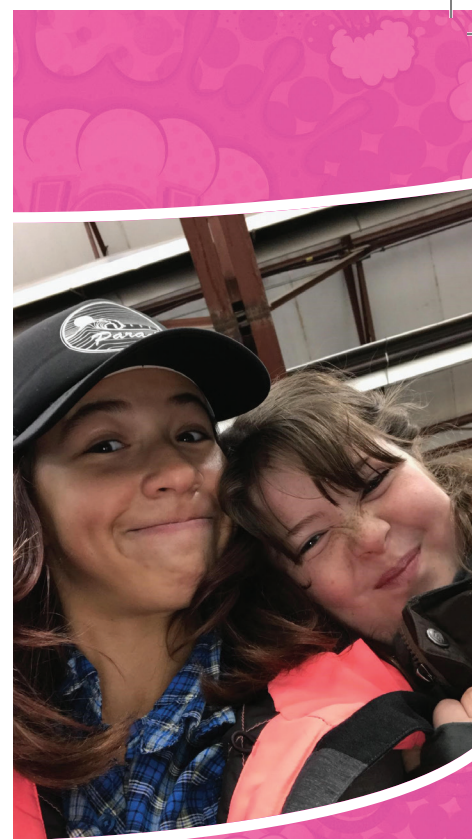
**Individual Advocacy** – YCAO helps young people effectively access government services, and have their views and rights heard and considered in the decisions being made by government service providers.

**Systemic Advocacy** – YCAO may review systemic or policy issues that arise in the course of individual advocacy.

**Public Education** – YCAO provides information workshops about the role of the Advocate and children’s rights. YCAO attends, participates in and hosts youth-centred community events.

## What Guides Us:

- ★ *Child and Youth Advocate Act*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *Truth and Reconciliation Commission 94 Calls to Action*
- *National Advocacy Standards (CCCYA)*

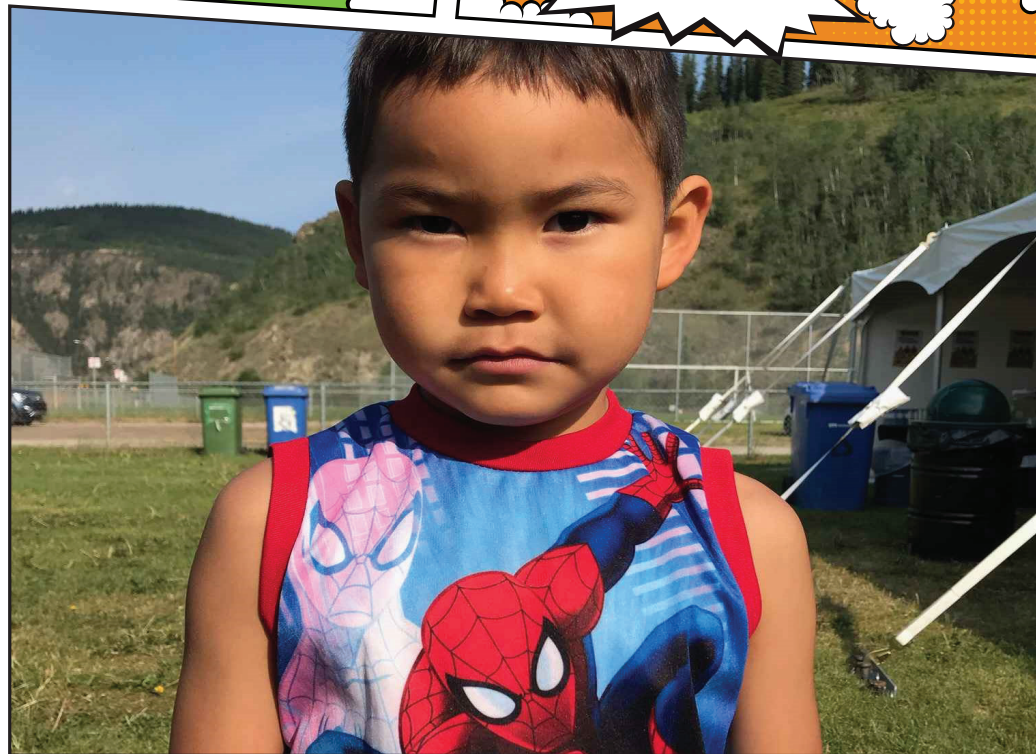
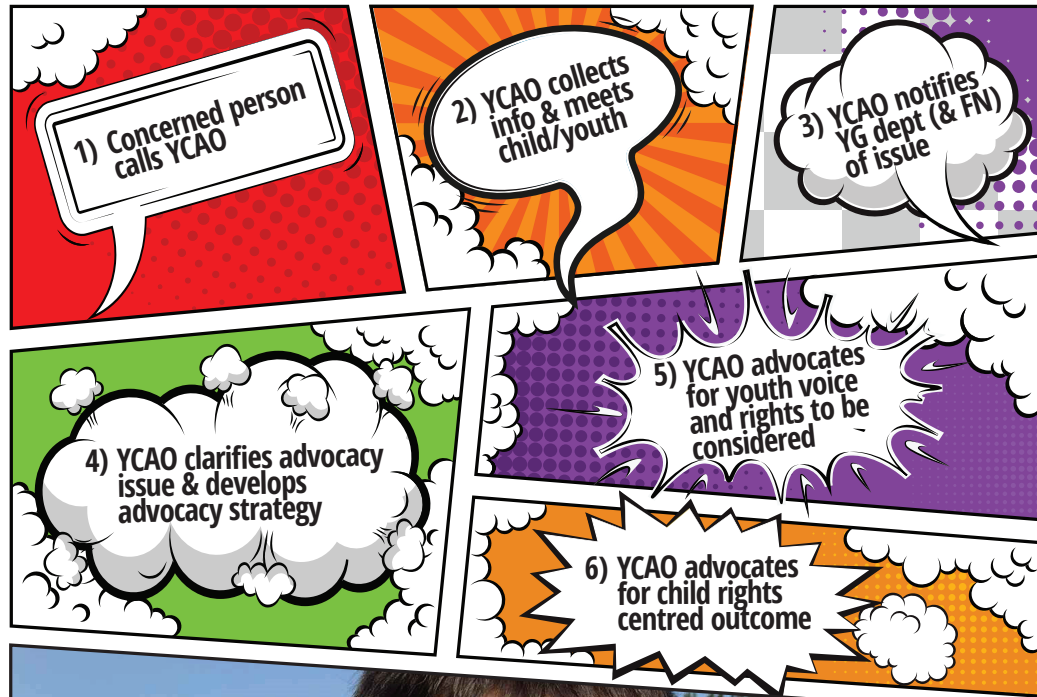


## DID YOU KNOW?

YCAO is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly that is dedicated to protecting the views and rights of children and youth who are eligible to receive services within Yukon Government.



# INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY





## Caseload Stats

### HOW MANY CHILDREN/YOUTH ACCESSED YCAO THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

Total # of children accessing YCAO in 2018-2019:	<b>195</b>
# of children continuing to access YCAO from previous years:	<b>123</b>
# of new children accessing YCAO in 2018-2019:	<b>72</b>

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

Total # of advocacy issues addressed in 2018-2019:	<b>310</b>
# of new advocacy issues in 2018-2019:	<b>156</b>
# of advocacy issues continuing from previous years:	<b>154</b>
# of issues resolved (closed) in 2018-19:	<b>269</b>
# of informal advocacy files received in 2018-2019:	<b>67*</b>

\* Informal advocacy issues are concerns that are brought to YCAO but do not fit the mandate for advocacy action. YCAO instead provides information and makes referrals to community resources who may be of assistance in providing formal support.

### WHERE ARE THE ADVOCACY ISSUES?

Whitehorse:	<b>236</b>
Other Communities:	<b>74</b>

### HOW MANY ISSUES ARE FOR FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN AND YOUTH?

Indigenous – Yukon:	<b>187</b>
Indigenous Outside of Yukon:	<b>60</b>
Non-Indigenous:	<b>63</b>



### DID YOU KNOW?

In 2018-19, YCAO hired an Individual Advocacy Caseworker to assist with the high volume of new referrals and to address the backlog of unresolved advocacy issues.



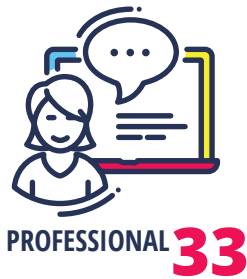
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## DID YOU KNOW?

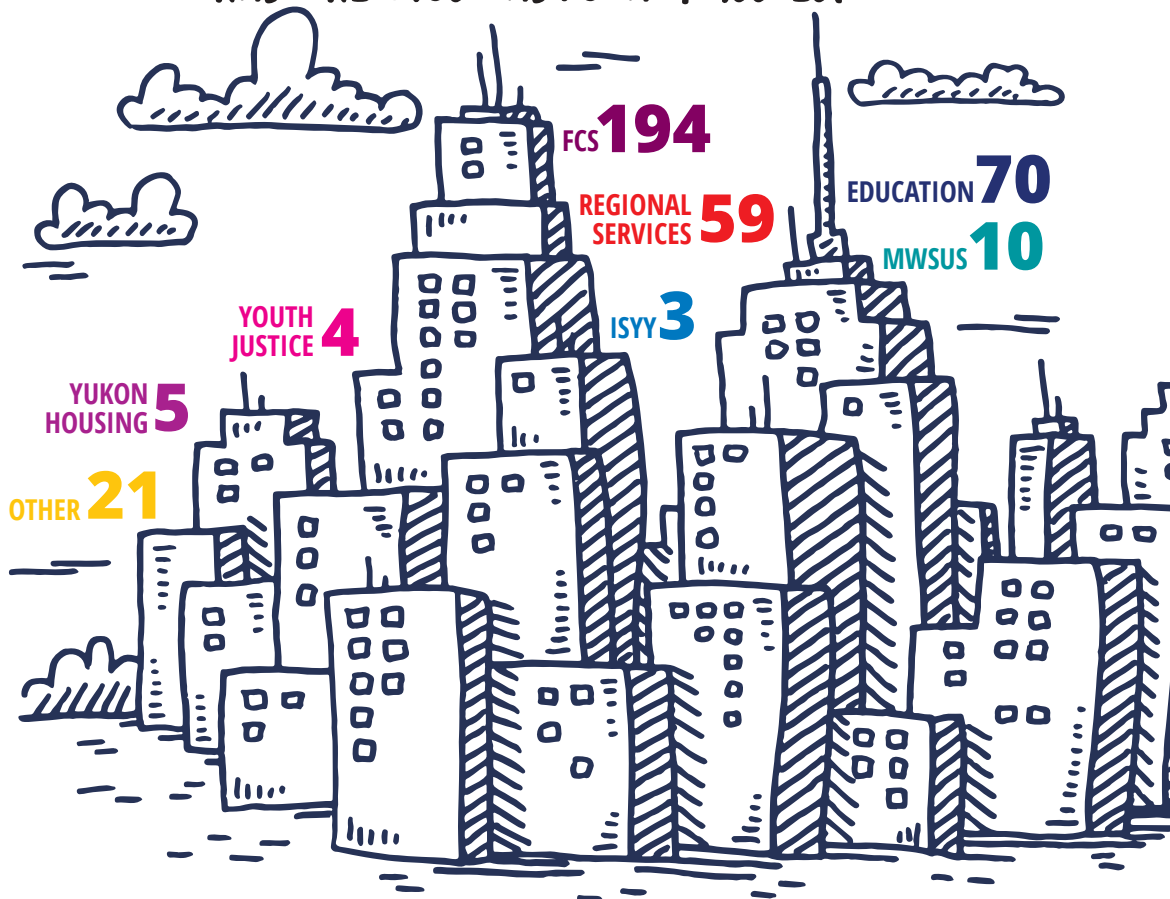
The majority of children and youth YCAO provides advocacy for are experiencing the impacts of intergenerational trauma.

16% of children and youth who access YCAO are Indigenous from outside the Yukon, primarily NWT.

## Who Referred Advocacy Issues?



## WHICH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAD THE MOST ADVOCACY ISSUES?



ISYY – Integrated Supports for Yukon Youth (closed in 2018)  
 MWSUS – Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services  
 FCS – Family and Children's Services

## Case Scenario – Access to Education

Charlie was sent home from school for aggressive behaviour. Charlie's mother was called and told that Charlie cannot return to school full time in order to keep the children and teachers safe. Charlie is in grade 3. Charlie has a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder and has had a psychoeducational assessment with recommendations to accommodate Charlie's learning style. Charlie's mother requested a school transfer and said that Charlie would not be going back to this school.

### Advocacy Issue

Access to education – attendance and supports. Charlie has a right to attend school and to have access to appropriate assessments as well as supports to ensure recommendations are implemented.

### Advocacy Action

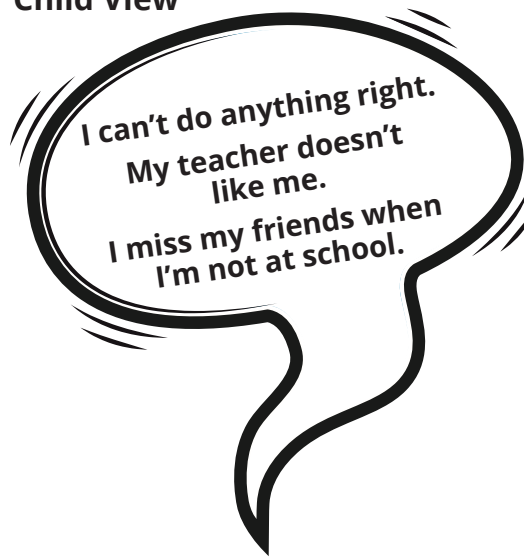
YCAO met with Charlie, then notified the school principal and the superintendent of the advocacy issue and requested information on educational assessments and educational supports for Charlie. The school had a team meeting, including Department

of Education specialist, and the mother, to discuss reintegrating back into school full time. YCAO presented Charlie's views and rights at the meeting.

### Resolution

Additional assessments were offered by Department of Education. Charlie's mother and Charlie created a safety plan with the teacher to better understand the root causes of behaviours and to develop constructive responses. Charlie returned to school.

### Child View



### DID YOU KNOW?

Children have a right to a quality education that supports and develops their talents, abilities and potential (UNCRC Article 28, 29).

Children with disabilities have a right to special education and supports so they can live a full life (UNCRC Article 23).



## DID YOU KNOW?

Children who cannot live with their parent(s) have a right to have their living situation reviewed regularly (UNCRC Article 25).

Children have a right to participate in case planning to have their opinions considered (UNCRC Article 12).

## Case Scenario - permanency planning and participation

Jamie is 10 years old has been living in a group home for two years. Jamie has siblings that live in other places (group care, foster care, extended family care). Although Jamie says most of the group home staff are pretty nice, Jamie wishes her mom could take care of her; but, she doesn't like it when her mom drinks. Jamie enjoys visiting with her Uncle. Group home staff say they don't know how long Jamie will be living there. Jamie is not invited to case planning meetings.

### Advocacy Issue

Jamie needs a long term plan that provides safety, stability, healing and supports connection with family, culture and community. Jamie has a right to be involved in the decisions being made about her.

### Advocacy Action

YCAO clarified the current placement plan with Family and Children's Services (FCS). The social worker agreed to host a meeting with Jamie and the First Nation where Jamie could share her view with the workers. Jamie tells the social worker that she wants to live somewhere else and is told they are waiting to find a family member that can take all of the siblings, until then, Jamie needs to stay in the group home.

### Resolution

Having heard Jamie's view, FCS connects with Jamie's Uncle and determines the home to be a suitable placement for Jamie, with supports. Jamie moves to her Uncle's with transitional supports from the group home staff. YCAO follows up to ensure supports for Uncle are provided long term and that placement remains safe. Jamie's social worker arranges regular visits with Jamie and her siblings and her mother when safe.

### Child View

I don't know who will be here when I wake up.

I don't know who my social worker is.

I don't know who decides where I will live.

I want to live with my mom or my Uncle.

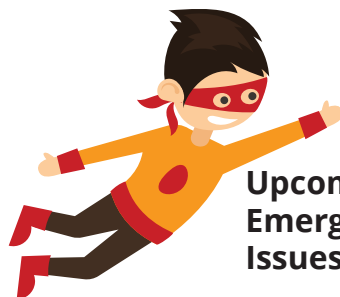


# SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

**Section 12 (1) of the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Act** states that if in the course of performing individual advocacy functions on behalf of a child or youth, the Advocate becomes aware of a policy or systemic issue in respect of the designated service that raises a substantial question of public interest, the Advocate may review and provide advice in respect of the issue.

With 673 advocacy issues over 9 years of advocacy, YCAO has identified several trends and themes that require systemic advocacy.

**Section 12 (2) of the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Act** states that if a review of a policy or systemic issue requires resources beyond those available to the Advocate, the Advocate may, rather than reviewing and providing advice on the issue, bring the issue to the attention of the department, First Nation service authority or school board that is providing the designated service.



**Upcoming/  
Emerging  
Issues.**



**Emerging Priorities**

- » Inconsistent School Attendance.
- » Permanency Planning.
- » Extended Family Supports.
- » Youth homelessness.
- » Child and Youth Mental Health.
- » Custody and Access.
- » Prevention and supports for families.



**Current/  
Open Issues.**



**Active**

- » Ageing Out of Care.
- » Experiences of children and youth living in group care.



**Previous  
Issues.**

**Previous**

- » Child and Youth Mental Health (2012).
- » Out of Territory Treatment (2016).
- » Staffing resources at a rural school (2016).

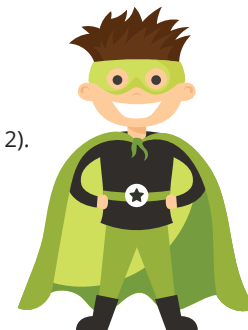




Photo: archbould.com

## 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.

## Upcoming Systemic reviews

### » Inconsistent School attendance.

School attendance appears to be an issue for many children and youth accessing YCAO (both elementary and high school). YCAO will work with the Dept. of Education to better understand the barriers to attending school consistently.

### » Youth Homelessness.

YCAO worked with Shakat Media to produce a film about youth homelessness to better understand the experience of young people regarding homelessness.

### » Permanency Planning.

When a child lives away from their parents, their living situation should be reviewed regularly and they should be provided with the supports necessary to develop, thrive and experience a sense of belonging. YCAO is planning to review impacts for children living in long term out of home placements.

### » Mental Health.

YCAO is working locally with services providers and nationally with Child and Youth Advocates to coordinate a youth centered response for child and youth mental health. CCCYA collaborated on a national report on youth suicide in Canada (public release - Sept 2019).

### » Custody and Access.

YCAO receives dozens of calls a year about the impacts of separation and divorce on children. Given there is often not a designated service to address custody issues, YCAO provides informal advocacy and recommends that parents request the Court to appoint a children's lawyer to ensure a child rights focus in custody decisions.

### » Prevention.

Families need supports to raise children. A threshold for risk and abuse should not have to be reached in order to access services. YCAO is encouraged by the inclusion of prevention in the federal child welfare plan and has shared concerns with Yukon Health and Social Services.

## Ageing Out

How youth age out of care has been a long standing issue locally and nationally.

YCAO Ageing Out Activities:

- » Xhastin's Healing Place Ageing Out Gathering – May 2018.
- » *Ageing Out* video by Carrie Davis – Summer 2018.
- » *Ageing Out* video launch– Sept 2018.
- » Report to Department of HSS about the YCAO Systemic Issue of Ageing Out – Feb 2019.
- » Inclusion of Ageing Out as a finding in the systemic review *Empty Spaces – Caring Connections: The Experiences of Children and Youth in Group Care* – April 2019.
- » Summary of Ageing Out concerns in YCAO submission to Advisory Committee on Review of the *Child and Family Services Act* – April 2019.

## Youth Voice



## DID YOU KNOW?

Carrie Davis grew up in the Yukon group homes and is now a student of digital media communications in Nanaimo.

## DID YOU KNOW?

It is the Yukon Government's responsibility to ensure that individualized care, guidance and support are provided for children and youth who cannot live with their parents.

## Empty Spaces Caring Connections: The Experiences of Children and Youth in Group Care (The Group Home Review)

- » In 2018, YCAO conducted a systemic review of the experiences of 94 children and youth living in group care between April 2015 and March 2018.
- » YCAO included the views of children and youth, group care staff, and First Nations representatives.
- » 74% of the children and youth in the review are members of a First Nation.
- » YCAO submitted the complete report to Health and Social Services (HSS) on April 10, 2019.

YCAO identified the following themes from the review:





## Stepping Stones For Meaningful Change

- » YCAO recognizes that the issues for children and youth in group care are long standing systemic issues and that impactful change will not happen quickly. The Stepping Stones for meaningful change are designed to guide the Department of Health and Social Services to consider the rights and best interests of children and youth in all decision making processes.
- » YCAO believes that all child welfare interventions should be child rights

focused acts of reconciliation, with youth voice at the forefront.

- » YCAO has the authority to request YG departments advise of steps taken regarding systemic advocacy concerns. YCAO directed Health and Social Services to respond to the recommendations by July 31, 2019.
- » YCAO will actively follow up and monitor the responses from Health and Social Services twice a year.

YCAO made 30 recommendations in the following categories:



*I don't know why I went to a group home. I wanted to see my brother. staff keep changing.*

*I ran away a bunch of times. I need a healthy place where I can succeed. I don't know what is actually being said about me at meetings; It's weird. It was hard to build relationships.*



## DID YOU KNOW?

YCAO had formal support from the Alberta Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to conduct this systemic review.



# PUBLIC EDUCATION

YCAO has participated in the following activities over the last year.

## DID YOU KNOW?

For our National Child Day tribute, we thanked Shakat Media for all of their hard work and support for youth based projects including:

- » Ageing Out film and interviews.
- » Youth Homelessness video.
- » Jays Care final tournament.
- » Millennial Town Hall.



- » Annual Open House.
- » GlobalChild.
- » ESES Breakfast Program.



- » Yukon Rookie League.
- » Hot Chocolate Event.
- » Family Swim.
- » Challenge Day at F.H. Collins.



- » Support youth to go to UN Assembly for Youth.
- » Millennial Town Hall.
- » Child rights training for social workers.
- » Community travel.



- » Song writing with Tahltan Havoc (Jeremy Linville).
- » Work with Shakat.
- » Child rights trivia night.



Community travel included trips to Teslin, Carmacks and Watson Lake. With additional staffing it is much easier to have workers travel to the communities. It is crucial that YCAO be able to visit the communities as they represent, and support, over 25% of our clients.

If you would like YCAO to come to your community, please contact us.



## Yukon Rookie League

With support of Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Softball Yukon, YCAO hosted the final gathering of the 2018 Jays Care Foundation Yukon Rookie League in June 2018. 100 kids (and their families) participated in a skills competition and dirt exchange at the Kwanlin Dün ball field followed by a closing tournament at the Softball Yukon complex.

## YUKON ROOKIE LEAGUE TEAMS AND CLOSING TOURNAMENT



### DID YOU KNOW?

Yukon Rookie League is a youth led program supported by Jays Care Foundation focused on children's rights to: culture, play, and participation.

OUR "UNSTOPPABLE" YOUTH ADVISORS WENT TO TORONTO TO WITNESS THE TORONTO BLUE JAYS RECOGNIZE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY WHERE DIRT FROM THE YUKON WAS SPRINKLED ON HOME PLATE AND NEVAEH WEBB THREW THE FIRST PITCH!



Photo: Jays Care Foundation

## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2018 Kwanlin Dün First Nation also accessed funding from Jays Care Foundation to build the "Field of Dreams".



Photo: Jays Care Foundation

Jenny and Madison with Hazel Mae!



Photo: Jays Care Foundation

Nigel and Ace.



Photo: Jays Care Foundation

The youth advisors in Toronto.



# RESEARCH PROJECT



## GlobalChild

The GlobalChild project is an international project, based out of Belfast Ireland, designed to inform the United Nations about how children and youth believe their rights are being upheld in their country.

GlobalChild has 49 focus groups taking place in 33 different countries, 9 are happening in Canada, supported by Dr. Ziba Vaghri of University of Victoria.

**YCAO facilitated 11 focus groups in Whitehorse.** The input the children and youth provided will help create a new Global Monitoring Tool for countries to use as a form of reporting to the United Nations.



Focus group at Vanier School.



# 6

Schools that have participated in the project.



# 53

Yukon children who have participated in the project.



# 11

Presentations held.

## DID YOU KNOW?

YCAO encourages youth to participate in the amplifying the rights of all children and youth. We are inspired with the Social Justice Clubs in schools and the opportunities they have to learn about their rights.



# BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH STUDENT PARTICIPATION

YCAO is thankful to all the students who were involved with the office throughout the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Student participation is an important way to further our advocacy work and to build and spread awareness regarding children's rights. In 2018-19, YCAO worked with the following students:

- » Summer STEP Student – Taylor Campbell.
- » BSW Practicum Students – Stephanie Sullivan (fall 2018) and Mary Michelle Dove (winter 2019).
- » Yukon Rookie League youth coaches and youth advisors (ages 12-15).
- » 53 Yukon students (elementary and high school) participated in YCAO's focus groups for GlobalChild research project.
- » Daniela Bendo, from Carleton University and the Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights included YCAO in her PhD research about child advocacy in Canada.
- » Three students enrolled in the Yukon College BSW Policy Class analyzed Yukon's Mental Wellness Strategy with a child rights lens and presented their findings to YCAO.
- » Our very own Annie Blake graduated with her Bachelor of Social Work degree. Way to go Annie!



BSW students Bethana, Ira and Omar.



# LEGISLATIVE REVIEWS

**Overall, the *Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Act* requires improvements to ensure effective advocacy for Yukon children and youth.**

In July 2018, YCAO provided a comprehensive submission to Member Services Board describing the experiences of YCAO to date and recommending the following amendments to the *Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Act*:

- » Strengthen the primary role of YCAO by including systemic advocacy, public education and public reporting.
- » Expand YCAO's authority to undertake case reviews and investigations in the cases of a critical injury or death of a child or youth.
- » Notify YCAO of every child death in the territory, as well as every critical injury of a child receiving, or eligible to receive, designated services.
- » Include the TRC *Calls to Action*, the *UNCRC*, and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in the guiding principles of the legislation.
- » Remove YCAO as a designated public body under the *Yukon Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

**The vision of YCAO is to have a child rights lens applied to all government actions.**

## ***Child and Family Services Act***

YCAO met with the Advisory Committee for the Review of Yukon's *Child and Family Services Act* and provided a comprehensive submission highlighting the importance of: prevention, intensive family supports, participation of children and youth, supports for ageing out of care, and advocacy for children and youth.

## ***The Coroners Act***

YCAO provided input to the Minister of Justice recommending enhanced reporting, reviews and investigations after the death of a child or youth.

## ***Cannabis Control and Regulation Act***

In 2017, YCAO submitted input regarding the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*. The 2018 territorial legislation generally reflects child development guidelines and children's right to be protected from harmful drugs.



Photo: archbould.com

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

All governments are obligated to uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). 192 countries throughout the world have ratified the UNCRC. YCAO recommends the use of formal Child Rights Impact Assessments to ensure consideration and implementation of children's rights.



# 10 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD INCLUDE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN DECISIONS

1. It's an obligation - the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified in 1989.
2. You can prevent bigger problems down the road.
3. You will be empowering our leaders of tomorrow.
4. You will be role modelling for others on how to validate children's concerns.
5. Children need you to protect their rights.
6. Children will be more likely to uphold the rights of others.
7. When children can express themselves, they will be more likely to ask for help.
8. Children will learn how to set goals and advocate for themselves to achieve them.
9. Reconciliation: You will be showing a healthy way forward.
10. Youth quote: *"It's our future"*.

