

Provincial Director of Child Welfare
YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL
THE FIRST YEAR REPORT



September
2015 – 2016



Ministry of
Children and Family
Development



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Message from the Youth Advisory Council

To the Minister, Provincial Director, Executives and all the amazing social workers and service providers we've met along the way...

We, the Provincial Director's Youth Advisory Council, would like to officially declare victory over the goals we set out for ourselves in 2016. It has been a tremendous year for our YAC group as well as child welfare in general. Yes, we still have a long way to go, but many important seeds have been planted. We have been empowered through opportunity, and in the process, we have helped empower others. To say we are grateful would be an understatement, and the word "fulfilled" just isn't full enough to describe the experiences we have had this past year. It has been an incredible ride indeed.

In September 2015, our group met for the first time without the slightest clue of what to expect. There was a lot of excitement, mixed with some skepticism, and at the very least we knew we would get some good food out of the deal. You literally couldn't have picked a more diverse group of youth to come together. We all had such different ideas, identities, backgrounds, experiences, and we were from all different parts of BC. Nevertheless, we all had this one common thread that tied us all together into what would become a powerful bond... foster care. There is something about looking at someone, even a person you don't know, and knowing they have felt the same struggles as you that instantaneously makes you feel connected to them. We are so different, yet exactly the same, and it wasn't long until we were all the best of friends.



This bonding has been very important to our work because it has made us the strong and focused team we are today.

So what exactly have we done do you ask? Well, we have advised on emergency phone lines, guardianship policies, AYA expansion, aging out initiatives, social worker/foster parent training videos and training tip sheets/modules. We have spoken with Grand Chief Ed John for his recently released report, the B.C. Coroner about youth drug use and overdoses, with multiple researchers on various projects they were collecting data on (i.e. educational outcomes, youth councils, etc.) as well as provided consultation for MCFD Executives (The Minister, Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Ministers, and the Provincial Director). We have collectively spoken on more panels than we can readily remember and have directly engaged with hundreds, if not thousands, of social workers, service providers, and foster parents through these talks/videos. On top of all this, we helped put together, host, and create/facilitate workshops for the 2016 Guardianship Forum at the Radisson hotel in Richmond, BC. A few of us have even been hired, on a more consistent basis, with the Ministry as well. It is pretty safe to say we are awesome!

There is another thing we have collectively accomplished which deserves its own unique attention. This is of course our own personal transformations. As foster kids, or alumni of care, we have each lived through traumatic experiences in our lives. These incidents, and the baggage that comes with them, has served as a continuous obstacle for many of us. These things can make us feel shame, anger, worthlessness, and like black sheep, without purpose or a place to belong. During our time on the council, we have found opportunities to share this negativity and transform it into a positive. Our scars have become the lessons we teach, and our emptiness has lifted us up onto stages where we are filled with a sense of pride in our own resiliency. There are members of this YAC who've found a place to finally be heard and others who have found voices they never knew they had. Our group has taken the shattered pieces of all our broken lives and put them together to create a beautiful mosaic of love and insightfulness. We are becoming the very champions we prayed-hoped-wished for when we were younger, and we have pledged ourselves to positive change both inside and outside of this council. Long live foster kids here and the world over!

All in all, the journey to this point has been an adventure worthy of the greatest tales. We were the lost children, without hope for a future, and battling for our survival. We have fought in ways children should never have to; slaying dragon sized demons. We've marched uphill through the storm, weary from trying, and with nothing but a little bit of hope, no bigger than a grain of sand, to keep us going... and in the end, we made it. We conquered the iniquities of our adolescence and are now learning to thrive in the world as we were meant to! What a story we have to tell.

Thank you so much for providing us with the space and opportunities to tell it. Your patience, support, and willingness to listen is a powerful medicine that may be greater than you know.

Much love and respect from the YAC crew! 😊

Message from the Provincial Director of Child Welfare



It is my great pleasure to submit the first annual report for the Provincial Director of Child Welfare's Youth Advisory Council – fondly known as YAC.

This has been an amazing inaugural year. While I knew this passionate group of young people would make a difference, I never envisioned just how much of an impact they would make in only a year. I still remember coming together for the first time in September 2015. While we were all really excited about getting to know each other and the work we would do together, we were also a little apprehensive about what we were about to embark on. At the end of that first weekend, it was clear that this was a group that was going to make a difference in a very big way.

This group of 15 youth in care and former youth in care has provided that voice to numerous Ministry branches and several community organizations over the year. The group of 17 to 26 year olds, who represent diverse provincial geography, cultures and care experiences, is unique in that the council's coordinator is also a youth.

MCFD is committed to have youth inform its work. The YAC has provided a valuable, necessary voice to policy, training and practice tables throughout MCFD as well as to the Ministry of Health and to Grand Chief Ed John's report on Indigenous Child Welfare in BC. The YAC has responded to numerous invitations to tell their stories as a means of supporting staff and stakeholders towards a better system to improved practice and better outcomes for children and youth.

I want to thank everyone who has supported the YAC this first year. Your efforts to engage with the YAC to seek their advice and voice in the work has not only been appreciated, but has led to positive change.

I would also like to thank the YAC – each and every one of them - for their courage in stepping up and committing to the work over the past year. They are such an inspiring group and I feel honoured to be part of it. I continue to learn so much every time we are together. Their insight, honesty and desire to improve the lives of children and youth served by the child welfare system is unwavering. The success of their work is best summed up in a phrase I've heard many times by those who meet them: "This will change how I practice."

I am looking forward to the year ahead!

Cory

Purpose of this Report

This report highlights key activities the Youth Advisory Council was involved in during the first year of operation from September 2015 to 2016.

About Us

In September 2015, the Ministry of Children and Family Development formed the Provincial Director of Child Welfare's Youth Advisory Council. The council informs, discusses and provides recommendations to the Provincial Director of Child Welfare and other ministry program areas and working groups regarding services and policies impacting children, youth and families. Youth Advisory members are responsible for promoting youth perspectives through participation in teleconferences, face-to-face meetings and working groups.

This council is comprised of fifteen youth in and from care throughout British Columbia. They represent a diverse range of perspectives including but not limited to, youth who represent a range of age groups, cultural groups, gender identities, Service Delivery Areas, Ministry Offices and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies.

Who We Are

Each council member brings a unique perspective to this diverse group with different care statuses, experiences utilizing programs and services and life in and out of care. During their time with the council, many of the youth attended post-secondary, worked, aged out of the system all while dedicating their hearts and minds to working alongside the Ministry.

Aliah Gilbert

Ashley Frerichs

Ashley McMullin

Bryant Doradea

Tim Bolton

Clay Spada

Guy Bonneau

Jess Boon

Jo-Mary Crowchild-Fletcher

Jordanna Southall

Lucy Pete

Raven McCallum

Ruby Barclay

Sara Poirier

Kyle Mitchell

How We Work

The Youth Advisory Council meets quarterly in person for weekend meetings with guest presenters or work on individual projects. In addition to in-person meetings, the YAC members hold video conferences once a month to provide consultation or discuss ongoing projects or other initiatives. YAC members have the opportunity to work on other projects they feel passionate about or have time to provide consultations or give presentations. The council has a private Facebook group where the coordinator posts updates and opportunities for members to take part in. Ministry staff can connect with YAC by submitting a request for participation form that is reviewed by YAC.

Who Supports Us - MCFD Staff

The Ministry staff that are directly involved with the Council include:

Cory Heavener - *Executive Sponsor*

Audrey Lundquist - *Aboriginal Elder*

Jordanna Southall - *Service and Delivery Liaison*

Tamara Leonard-Vail - *Learning and Development*

Coordinator

Brenda Lewis - *Project Lead*

Kymerlee Stogan - *Project Coordinator*

Chelsea Turpin - *Policy Liaison*



MEET THE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL - 2015/16



Clay Spada

Hey there! My name is Clay Spada and I am from Vancouver, currently living in Richmond. I have a passion for working with youth and children and plan to pursue that in college. I have recently graduated high school and will be attending Langara in the Fall. Being in the Youth Advisory Council is an amazing opportunity for me since I have been in foster care since I was 6 years old and have many opinions and thoughts about the system and look forward to sharing.



Sara-Ann Poirier

My name is Sara-Ann Poirier. I like being called Sara. I am from Port McNeill. I currently live in Port Hardy. My birth family is French Canadian, my adopted family is American. I really enjoy fine arts. I enjoy playing guitar, singing, dancing, theatre, meeting people, going on walks/jogs, and being social. I am an outgoing person. I am currently employed at A&W and Your Dollar Store With More. I have just graduated from high school and will be attending Vancouver Island University this September. I hope to bring useful and innovative ideas to the council and to be very active in group activities. I would like to use my position on the council to help make a difference in the lives of other foster children and I would like to one day get a full time career working for a child welfare department.



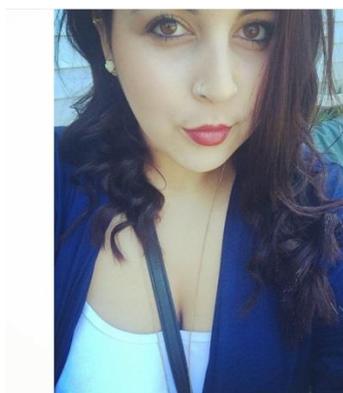
Timothy Bolton

My name is Timothy Bolton. You can call me Tim or Timmy. I'm not very picky. I am from the village of Kitkatla B.C. I am coastal Tsimshian. I enjoy playing guitar, boxing and spending time with my significant other (my girlfriend). I am living in the small city of Prince Rupert. I just graduated from high school. I plan on helping create change for the better in the foster care system. My goal is to get to know my fellow team members, and get involved more on the youth advisory council.



Ruby Barclay

My name is Ruby Barclay. I am originally from Powell River, BC but have recently moved to Nanaimo, BC for school. I am currently entering my 2nd year in Child and Youth Care Studies at Vancouver Island University with the hopes to complete a degree specialized in Child Welfare and Activity Based Intervention. I hope to bring not just good vibes and aspirations for change to the Youth Advisory Council, but also my educational and professional background. During our time together on the council, I hope we can achieve our own group intentions; one of my personal ones of making connections between various supports to create equal understanding of the needs for those transitioning out of care. When I'm not changing the world with the rad crew that is the Youth Advisory Council, I spend time outdoors connecting with the environment, indulging in my studies, supporting my community as an RA in student housing, laughing with friends and grooving to tunes. Other than that, you can either find me signing petitions or eating copious amounts of fruit while indulging in a Netflix marathon.



Aliah Marie Phoenix Gilbert

My name is Aliah Marie Phoenix Gilbert. I've lived many places but I'd say my home town is Maple Ridge. I'm currently living in the little town of Boston Bar in the Fraser Canyon area. My ethnicity is Somali, Norwegian, Croatian and a little bit of Irish. When I have spare time, I enjoy reading & writing, photography, exploring the beautiful area I live in, and hanging out with my friends and family of course. This year I'll finally be in Grade 12! This is also my third year working at Hells Gate Airtram. It's an interesting job! I get to meet people of all different cultures and make friends from various places. Not too long ago I got a job with the Fraser Valley Regional Library as well. I hope to bring a different perspective to the Youth Advisory Council. I've always been the sort of person to jump up and help when something needs fixing or improvement. Being able to listen and give my opinion may just help somebody someday. It may give some kid a better childhood and that's what motivates me.



Bryant Doradea

My name is Bryant Doradea. I am 25 years old, Hispanic, and I am one of your fellow council members as well as a former child in care. I currently reside in Vancouver, work at an amazing restaurant as a prep cook, and I first entered foster care around the age of 3-4 and bounced around in over 20 homes until I aged out at 19. I like to think of myself as a sort of expert of street entrenched youth as I grew up rough on the streets of East Vancouver/Surrey, and I now hope to use that expertise in this group to help reach other young souls that need guidance and also help influence positive change both personally and systemically. Unfortunately I work a lot so I do not have a lot of time for frivolous endeavors but I can say that my deepest passions in life would be writing, music, performing, and helping people. Sometimes I am even blessed enough to achieve all of these things simultaneously which is amazing and humbling in itself. Although a lot of my friends and locals know me for rapping I am first and foremost a "writer" and I have a writer's bucket list I would like to finish before too long which includes a mixtape, album, a fictional book, autobiography, book of poetry, screen play, and movie script. I also love performing and have acted in plays, music videos, been an extra on tv shows, and have performed at clubs doing rap battles and some music too! If I had to sum up a singular objective that I wish to achieve in this group it would be to help create something new that can help every single person connected to the ministry and/or foster care in a big way. I know that sounds very vague but that is only because it IS vague and I don't know exactly what this thing or idea is yet, but I know it's out there somewhere... like something on the tip of your tongue. A mind changing, life altering, precedent setting new idea that can help change the world!! Yeah yeah I know I am a bit dramatic and a bit of a dreamer haha but I believe that this group was created because there are some very difficult questions that have been asked repeatedly for a long long time and indeed I believe in our imaginations, in our hearts, and even in our pain and struggle exists the answer... let us find it and hopefully make some good friendships as we do so! I am excited to meet you all... much love and respect! :D



Ashley McMullin

I'm from and currently live in Vanderhoof. My interests include volunteering with younger children and fishing at various lakes in my community with my boyfriend. This past June I graduated high school and I am currently working at the local grocery store. I hope to bring the perspective of someone from a rural community and the different needs they have compared to foster kids in the city. As a youth advisory council member, my only goal is to be able to use my experience in care to create some kind of changes in the flawed foster care system.



Jordanna Southall

My name is Jordanna Southall. I was in foster care from age four until I aged out living with the same caregivers who were absolutely amazing to me and my brother. We grew up on a 12-14 acre farm in Coombs where my first job was working in the restaurant of the Coombs Country Market with the goats on the roof. I was very fortunate to have had such a wonderful experience growing up with my foster family who raised me into an intelligent, responsible and respectful individual. With their support, student loans and the tuition waiver program I was able to attend university and get my bachelor of social work degree. Prior to attending university, I was a cook and prep cook. After doing some volunteer work I began jobs in my field. My social work related experience is working with children and youth with special needs and children in foster care. In the past, I was a behavior interventionist, tutor and respite provider. I am currently a social worker in Campbell River with MCFD. I enjoy a variety of outdoor activities including camping, hiking, snowboarding and lounging in and around fresh water. I also love cooking, yoga and snuggling my 5 year old blue healer. This summer I hope to try a new sport or hobby in the Campbell River area. In the youth advisory council, I hope to bring forward some ideas and promote positive changes that impact the lives of children and youth who are involved with MCFD. I hope to raise awareness for youth in care about programs that can assist them in pursuing post-secondary education. Overall, I hope to make positive changes that we can look back on and be proud of! I hope to make changes that will promote a positive experience in foster care such as the one that I had and allow for other children and youth in similar situations to be successful. I am extremely passionate about educational funding and support for youth in care as they transition into adulthood.



Kyle Mitchell

My name is Kyle Mitchell and I am from Kitchener, ON. I currently live in Balfour, near Nelson BC. I have a small bit of Métis heritage; however, the most influential cultural background would be from my Mennonite family. My main interest is currently any work pertaining to engineering, be it work experience, volunteering or the like. However, my hobbies are generally limited as I usually spend most of my time gaming or mountain biking. I am currently in the process of moving to Vancouver to start my second year of engineering, specializing in structural engineering. I currently work for Teck Cominco doing engineering drafting for their PLC upgrade project. I hope to bring a unique perspective to the youth advisory council as well as a positive attitude and I'd like to provide youth in care with an outlook that they too may succeed, regardless of their past.



Jo-Mary Crowchild-Fletcher

Hello, I'm Jo-Mary Crowchild-Fletcher. My first nations name is It'aza K'ohits'ika, which means Little Butterfly Woman when translated to English. I was born in Banff, Alberta. I slowly moved west to Golden, a small town in the Rocky Mountains, which is where I am living today. I am half Tsuu T'ina from my mother, a first nations tribe from south of Calgary, AB. My other side is of Caucasian ancestry (I don't know much about this side, I'm not super close with my father's side of the family). I participate in my culture by going to Sundances, PowWows, and sweatlodges regularly. On my free time, I love to play sports (soccer and hockey), read, write, and do practically anything outside (hike, canoe, fish, etc). I am a pretty active person, but then again I can be a nerd and watch a movie marathon of Harry Potter or LOTR. In the past, I have worked at my town's Women's Resource Centre, which was probably one of the best jobs I could ask for. I would assist women that came in, whether it was guiding them to an appointment, providing computer support (help make resumes, cover letters, emails, ect), or helping them find information that they needed. I would also be around to support my coworkers with fundraisers, or advice. My other jobs consisted of working with the public through the hockey arena and gardening. They were very enjoyable jobs and I learned a lot from them. When I found out about this job, I was ecstatic. This opportunity gives me a chance to add insight to what it was like to grow up in foster care as a first nation's child without having my culture around me until my teen years. I plan on using this opportunity to help make a difference for other first nation foster children. I hope that when my job as a Youth Advisory Council member is done, that I made a difference for future youth so they could have the best life possible.



Lucy Pete

I am 24 years old, from Smithers, BC. I have been living in Kelowna, BC for the last two years on my own. I am from the Wet'suwe'ten First Nations-Moricetown Band. I belong to the Anasgaski House which means where it lies blocking the trail. My clan is Gitumden which means Bear-Wolf. My interests are in helping others, learning and continuous education, taking on a challenge to try new things, like sports and trying to keep an active lifestyle. My hobbies include, cooking, baking, trying new recipes, sewing and crocheting, taking pictures and using Instagram. I am currently a Team Leader Housekeeper with Discover Kelowna Resort Accommodations (DKRA Housekeeping). I was the first member of my immediate biological family to graduate high school in 3 generations. I graduated with my Dogwood Diploma from Smithers Secondary School in 2008. In April 2013, I moved to Kelowna to pursue a career in the beauty industry studying at MC College. I graduated at the end of November 2013 with my full esthetics diploma and six other certificates to work in a spa. I hope to share my experiences with my time in care from the age of 10 months old (off and on) until I aged out when I turned 19, then continued to live with my last foster family until I was 21. I hope to learn from everyone on the youth council. In the future, I would like to attend UBC-Okanagan to take the Bachelor of Arts program for Indigenous Studies, and become more familiar with the foster care system on the social workers perspective. In 2008, I job shadowed a couple social workers as a part of the MCFD Youth Internship program for two weeks out of the summer. I am very excited to be a part of this Youth Council, I hope to learn lots and use all of the knowledge I get to help others that need it.



Ashley Frerichs

My name is Ashley Frerichs and I am originally from Victoria and moved to Nanaimo 3 years ago. My interests and hobbies include riding horses, playing saxophone, community development, youth engagement, research and exploring beautiful Nanaimo with my 3 year old Pomeranian Eskimo Mix - Bentley. Currently, I am in my third year of my degree in Child and Youth Care as a distance education student with the University of Victoria and am currently working for Nanaimo Youth Services Association supporting youth employment and youth engagement. Previously, I was employed as a former Child in Care Intern (which is the reason I moved to Nanaimo) with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, a youth co-researcher with both Ministry of Children and Family Development and the University of Victoria on various youth engagement initiatives and have recently made connections to begin working with a research project in September. I hope to bring support, my experiences, my networks and my passion to the Youth Advisory Council and one thing that I would like to achieve as a Youth Advisory Council Member is to bring new energy to the focus on youth engagement and youth adult partnerships within MCFD as well as support policy development and implementation.



Guy Bonneau

Hello there! My name is Guy Bonneau. I am 21 years old living in Vancouver, B.C. Although I can say I am from Vancouver, I have lived all over. I have moved over 30 times in my short life. Similarly for my background, I identify as Métis/European, I am a mix of roughly a dozen ethnic backgrounds! Even though I have been in one city my whole life, I like to think I have seen a lot. My life and my time is mostly spent working towards my future and well-being. I value self-care and have a huge passion for knowledge and learning. Over the past few years, I have experienced a great variety of jobs in my life. Starting in Dishwashing, to construction, factory work, to my jobs now of being a 1 to 1 worker with a youth in care and working with developmentally disabled people. I graduated high-school Class of 2013 with plans to enroll back in school for January 2016. My plan as an Executive Associate is to bring my skills, knowledge and passion of working with people. I will utilize my experience of 10 years in the foster care system to fight for change. I believe we are capable of creating better programs and supports for thousands of youth that are in care. One thing I hope to achieve as a youth advisory council member is a support network for kids in care and a support system for new people coming into the system. With my own experience of getting well, having a circle of love and trust around me has saved my life. My dream and vision is to create this place for people to grow, learn and live. With these great supports in place, I truly believe youth in care can access infinite possibilities ahead of them. They can live the lives they were always meant to live.



Jess Boon

Jess Boon is a community counsellor, former youth in care and third year student at the University of British Columbia. She works in East Vancouver as an independent contractor in the non-profit sector and specializes in child welfare. At UBC her areas of focus are political sciences and social work. Jess has lived experiences in the foster care system in British Columbia. Jess comes from a Trinidadian descent and identifies as a Mestizo woman; much of her story is told through that cultural lens.



Raven McCallum

My name is Raven McCallum. I am originally from Vancouver, but I will be moving to Victoria for employment as of September 1st. I am 24 years old and was in care from 1993-2009. I am a mix of Aboriginal and European descent, my mother was Haida and British and my father was Métis. I have dedicated my life to improving the lives of youth, as I strongly believe that youth are the future and through them, the most change in the world can be made. I am a student at the University of British Columbia in the Native Indian Teacher Education Program. I also sit on committees for youth Aboriginal health and wellness websites such as Cuyswti.ca and the up and coming Ask Auntie. Additionally, I am dedicated to working as an adult staff for the Royal Canadian Army Cadet program, a youth leadership program, and anticipate I will be sworn in as an officer in the Canadian Force Reserves during 2015 or 2016. Furthermore, I have recently been employed in the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program, where I have been slated to work as a researcher in the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training. When I am not working, I enjoy running, hiking, and playing with my dogs. It is truly an incredible to be able to be heard and represent people who are going through similar experiences in life. I hope that I am able to put my experience to use and I feel that my communication skills are going to be my strongest asset. My main goal is to assert positive change in the foster care system through the use of my voice and experience. Another goal I am setting is to meet like-minded individuals and broaden my networks within the Youth Advisory Council, as well as Ministry of Children and Family Development. I am very excited to begin working on the Youth Advisory Council and look forward to meeting all of the YAC team members!

YAC Council Update

YAC would like to thank and acknowledge Christian, Jess, Kyle, Lucy and Cheyenne for their contributions to the 2015-2016 Youth Advisory Council. After completing their one year term with YAC, they have decided to leave the council due to school, work, etc. They are now members of the YAC alumni and have the opportunity to remain involved if there is a request that aligns with their passions or an event/meeting held in their area. We wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

We are excited to welcome 8 new members to the 2016-2017 Youth Advisory Council alongside 10 members from the first year. Welcome Corey, Olivia, Jaye, Justice, Cammy, Natacha, Samantha and Athena!

Looking Back at Our Work – September 2015 to September 2016

This section highlights key activities the Youth Advisory Council was involved in during the first year of operation. These activities range from speaking engagements, consultations, advisory, meetings, and working groups.

Youth Advisory Council Meetings

The Youth Advisory Council met:

- 4 times per year face to face in Victoria/Vancouver for a weekend
- 1 per month via teleconference call for 1 hour

Each in person meeting begins with a circle check in to give each Youth Advisor an opportunity to update each other on things happening in their lives. Some of the meetings involve guest presenters who submitted a request to present or consult with the Youth Advisors. Meetings also include dedicated time for Youth Advisors to work with each other on their group projects, sharing meals together and celebrating birthdays.

1. The First Face to Face Meeting, September 2015, Victoria BC

The first inaugural meeting was held in Victoria, BC in September 2015. The meeting was filled with fun ice-breakers to allow the youth to get to know one another and an appreciative inquiry to determine topics that YAC was passionate about. These topic ideas would be used to identify four priority areas of interest for the YAC to work on during the year.

After the meeting, there was a group meal at the Spaghetti Factory with the Assistant Deputy Ministers from MCFD, Cory Heavener, Allison Bond and Christine Massey. During dinner, YAC members went around the table to introduce themselves and say one superpower they wish they had. Later in the evening, the group played games at the Board Game Café.





OPEN LETTER TO MCFD

Dear members of the Ministry of Children and Family Development:

We, the Youth Advisory Council, are excited to announce the formation of our new group as well as some of the goals that we hope to accomplish! You will be happy to know that our council consists of a very diverse team of current and former youth in care, and that each one of us brings our own unique experiences to the table. Collectively we hope to pool our knowledge together and create new ideas that will benefit the children and youth of this generation as well as generations to come.

After our first meeting this past month our council has already narrowed down many prevalent issues concerning the ministry. There is definitely a lot of work ahead of us all, and we have wasted no time in setting several strong initiatives into play for our new team to focus on. Rest assured that we do expect real results to come from our efforts, and that the objectives we strive for are by no means frivolous in nature. We look forward to sending you our first updates on what we're working on!

As a group we would also like to make sure that we acknowledge all of your support and hard work as well. We appreciate you for the complex entity and amazing individuals that you are. From the front line social workers, in the trenches, that fight every step of the way to keep kids safe. To the directors and team leaders battling bureaucracies and tirelessly working towards a better system - we appreciate you!

In closing, it is important for us to let you know that we are not here to chastise. We are not auditors or naysayers. We are neither judges nor jury. We believe that there has long existed a gap between helping hands and broken hearts. However, if we work together and bridge this gap, we can set new structures into place that will create real growth as well as start the healing that is so needed. Change isn't easy, and if there's one thing our adversities have taught us it's that nothing worth having comes easily. Regardless, change is inevitable, and with a little bit of hope we can and we will achieve positive change together! Stay passionate friends...

Eternally hopeful and unequivocally determined,

The Youth Advisory Council

2. Face to Face Meeting, February 2016, Victoria BC

In February 2016, YAC met with Grand Chief Ed John to discuss supporting Aboriginal children and youth in care by staying connected to culture, community and language. Other topics included custom adoptions and the role of community in building relationships with their children and youth in care.

Staff from the following program areas were invited to the YAC meeting:

- Connie Epp, from Guardianship and Permanency Branch, to discuss planning the Permanency Forum event, including workshops to be facilitated by YAC
- Julie Czeck, Senior Domestic Violence Analyst, from the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence, gave a presentation on "Improving the Post-Secondary Educational Outcomes for Former Youth in Care"

YAC had an opportunity to participate in a "Meet and Greet" with the Deputy Minister, Mark Sieben.

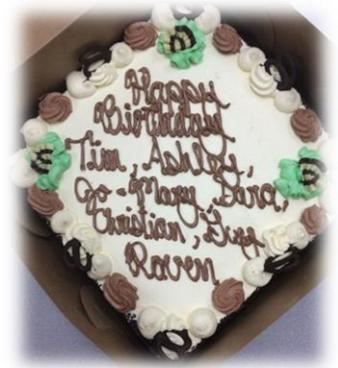


External guests were also invited to the meeting:

- Personal development presentation "The Illusion of Choice. How it all began and why conscious choice making matters by Walter Aguilar"
- Researchers from the Uvic Research Project met with YAC to discuss a project about "youth councils and engagement"

A birthday cake to celebrate Tim, Ashley F, Jo-Mary, Sara, Christian, Guy and Raven was enjoyed by all!





3. Face to Face Meeting, June 2016, Victoria BC

The third meeting was held in June 2016 in Victoria BC. YAC was busy preparing for World Café topics for the Permanency forum, working on an aging out project called, "What I wish I knew before I aged out" and preparing for other workshops. Assistant Deputy Minister, Allison Bond, joined YAC for dinner and celebrated birthdays that occurred since the last meeting. YAC members also led a panel discussion at the Service Delivery Division Leadership conference.





4. Face to Face meeting, September 2016, Vancouver BC

In September 2016, YAC met at the Radisson Hotel in Richmond BC to hold their fourth face to face meeting and attend the Permanency Forum. Seven new YAC members joined the group. YAC was very busy leading panel discussions and World Café topics at the forum. YAC spent the evening swimming and held a poetry session during their down time together.



Youth Advisory Council Project Participation

YAC members were invited to participate on a number of ministry initiatives and projects to seek their feedback, advice and recommendations to ensure ministry services and programs were effective and responsive to the needs of children and youth being supported by the Ministry and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies.

Highlights of YAC Project Participation

	Project	Division/ Branch/Team	Members Involved	What we accomplished
1	Centralized Screening Feedback	Service Delivery	13	Provided advice and feedback to promote and support a child and youth friendly centralized screening process.
2	Youth Transitions Core Advisory	Strategic Priorities	4	Met with the Youth Transitions project team to inform the current state of youth transition supports and provide advisory on potential new transition initiatives. Suggestions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan to establish a Youth Transitions Service framework
3	AYA Expansion Project	Strategic Priorities	1	Provided support to the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) Working Group to effectively implement AYA legislative changes. Participated in working group to support change management, engagement, practice, policy, technology and training shifts.
4	Permanency Forum 2016	Guardianship, Adoption and Permanency	3	Met bi-weekly to assist with the planning of the 2016 Permanency Forum and participated in sub-working groups. Planning included the theme and logo, reviewing proposals from presenters and inviting agencies to host community tables at the forum.
5	Caregiver Recruitment and Awareness Campaign	Strategic Priorities	7	Participated in the development of website and promotional materials, including posters and brochures. Developed a youth perspective video for the Caregiver Recruitment website.
6	HPV Vaccine Poster Feedback	Child Welfare Policy team	3	YAC provided feedback for the Ministry of Health HPV Vaccine poster and offered alternative wording to be used in reference to at-risk male population and HPV vaccines.

	Project	Division/ Branch/Team	Members Involved	What we accomplished
7	Social Worker Week Videos	Provincial Director of Child Welfare	5	Produced thank you videos to social workers posted on the ministry's intranet website for Social Worker Week.
8	BC Child and Youth in Care Week	Guardianship, Adoption and Permanency	1	Assisted with the planning of BC Child and Youth in Care week with various stakeholders.
9	Input on permanency for Aboriginal children in care	Special Advisor on Aboriginal Child Welfare	10	Members met with Grand Chief Ed John to discuss issues and proposed solutions for improving the child welfare system for Aboriginal children and youth in care, including better supports and planning. YAC members shared their unique experiences and perspectives in the report: http://fns.bc.ca/pdf/Final-Report-of-Grand-Chief-Ed-John-re-Indig-Child-Welfare-in-BC-November-2016.pdf
10	Input on effective messaging Preventing Death after Overdose: A Review of Overdose Deaths in Youth and Young Adults 2009 – 2013 by the BC Coroners Service Child Death Review Panel	Provincial Director of Child Welfare	9	YAC was consulted to share their insight and perspectives on effective ways to communicate to young people about how to recognize signs of an overdose and the importance of calling 911 immediately. The consultation was in response to Recommendation 2 from the BC Coroner's report.
11	Child Welfare Training Videos	Learning and Development	3	YAC produced video clips for the new online child welfare training program. Videos focused on four universal developmental needs for children and youth and best practices for meeting the needs of children and youth.
12	Children and Youth in Care Policies	Child Welfare Policy Team	1	Reviewed and provided feedback on children and youth in care policies, particularly the importance of building and maintaining meaningful relationships with youth, every effort to support and prepare youth for independence, the need for PGT to assist youth with their financial affairs and supporting youth involved in the youth justice system.
13	Practice Enhancer- Words of Wisdom on Supporting Street Entrenched Young Adults	Strategic Priorities	1	Shared and provided insights to create a 10 point tip sheet for Agreements with Young Adults. Check out the link: https://intranet.gov.bc.ca/assets/download/2F9CDCDFDC96460DB9254D4E6690BEA1&filename=phase_1_supporting_street_entrenched_young_adults_pe.pdf

The Youth Advisory Committee Feedback on Centralized Screening:

- **The option “if this is an emergency” should be the first thing listed.**
- **There are too many steps for children and youth - it needs to be simple.**
- **18 seconds could mean the difference between a youth deciding to call in or to back out.**
- **If a youth/child is calling MCFD this is rare.**
- **Youth want to know who they will be speaking to.**
- **Centralized screening feels “call center like.”**





**"My foster mom
always hung in there.
It meant the world
to me because
nobody else really
stuck around."**

— Guy, former youth in care

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Guy Bonneau, Youth Advisory Council, Fostering Connections

Youth Led Group Projects

Assistant Deputy Minister and Provincial Director of Child Welfare, Cory Heavener, gave the youth an opportunity to work on projects that were youth led. At the beginning of the year, the council decided to focus on four areas they were particularly passionate about. The Council accomplished these projects through development of workshops, videos and other resources that debuted at the 2016 Permanency Forum.

	Goal	Members	Actions
1	Ensuring there are good connections between social workers and child and youth	3	Developed and facilitated “Beyond the Surface: Developing Healthy Connections Between Social Workers and Youth in Care”.
2	Ensuring that youth are given a chance to have their needs met (life skills, etc) to become self-actualized.	4	Revised the Youth Independence Planner. Created a “What I wish I knew before I aged out” video. Developed and facilitated “Life Skills Through a Permanency Lens” (preparing youth for aging out).
3	Ensuring that youth are informed of supports after age 19.	2	Developed and facilitated “Youth Transitions Support and Resources”. Created a space for discussion about available resources and how to use them.
4	Promoting Awareness	5	Due to competing commitments, this topic will be explored at other time.

YAC Events

Youth Advisors attended a number of events during the past year (Sept 2015 to Sept 2016) including opportunities to give presentations, participate in panel discussions and lead workshops.

Event	Location	Members Involved
Presentation to the Adoptions CSM and Directors of Practice	Vancouver	1
Youth Panel on Permanency	Kamloops	2
Presentation to the Directors of Practice	Vancouver	3
Presentation on Youth Permanency	Prince George	3
Presentation to MCFD Executive	Victoria	2
Service Delivery Division Leadership Conference (Panel)	Vancouver	8
Presentation to New Hire Child Protection Social Workers	Vancouver	1
Meeting with the Minister	Victoria	7
Adoptions Announcement event with Minister	Victoria	2
Custom Adoptions event with Grand Chief Ed John	Vancouver	2
Permanency Forum 2016	Richmond	14



YAC Meeting Minister Stephanie Cadieux, May 2016

On May 18th 2016, Raven, Ruby, Sara, Guy, Bryant and Ashley F were invited to lunch with Minister Stephanie Cadieux at the Legislature in Victoria, BC. After lunch, the group had the opportunity to sit in during Question period where the Minister introduced each Youth Advisor to the House. After Question period, the group went on a tour of the legislative building. This was the first time for many of them visiting the Legislature.





Introductions by Members

Hon. S. Cadieux: I have a very special introduction to make today. It'll take me a moment to read through it, so I hope that the members will listen intently.

Joining us in the gallery today for the first time — indeed, for the first time in the Legislature precinct for all but one — are members of the ministry's Youth Advisory Council. I had the honour of having lunch with them today and hearing from them about their ideas about things we can do differently in the ministry.

I'd like very much to welcome Ruby Barclay. She's just completed her second year of her child and youth care degree at Vancouver Island University. Raven McCallum is completing her year with government's aboriginal internship program. This young Haida woman is also an officer and a reservist with the Royal Canadian Army Cadets. She is completing a degree in native Indian teacher education at UBC. Bryant Doradea is a terrific young man and a prolific writer of poetry and rap music.

Ashley Frerichs is entering her fourth year of child and youth care at the University of Victoria. Sara-Ann Poirier is attending Vancouver Island University as well, to complete her child and youth care degree. She's also an artist and budding film director. Guy Bonneau is working right now. He's got an incredible passion for youth and just for people. I've had an opportunity to speak with Guy on a number of occasions now. He's a terrific person and a feature at many slam poetry nights.

Lastly but not least, Kymberlee Stogan, hailing from Musqueam Nation. Kymberlee is the coordinator of the youth council. In its first year, she has done an absolutely incredible job of coordinating the council so that they can provide absolutely critical and real feedback for the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Accompanying them today is Cory Heavener, the director of child welfare. Please make them all welcome.



Permanency Forum 2016 – Strengthening Roots: Growing Lifelong Connections

In September 2016, the Adoption, Guardianship and Permanency Planning Branch in partnership with the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) hosted the 2016 Permanency Forum: *Strengthening Roots: Growing Lifelong Connections*.

YAC members were highly involved with the planning of the forum, including leading parts of the two day event. The YAC youth hosted a “World Café” which gave forum attendees the opportunity to engage in conversations about a number of topics. YAC youth shared some of their experiences of life in care.



YAC members:

- Facilitated 3 workshops
- 4 members volunteered to be Masters of Ceremonies
- 3 members participated in the working group to plan the forum
- Hosted the World café
- Hosted 3 sessions to approximately 20 staff per session about personal experiences and advice for Ministry staff
- Created the art work on display throughout the forum and the logo

We, the Youth Advisory Council, are a very diverse team of current and former youth in care, and that each one of us brings our own unique experiences to the table. Collectively we hope to pool our knowledge together and create new ideas that will benefit the children and youth of this generation as well as generations to come.

Youth Advisory Contributions at the Permanency Forum 2016



[Bryant - Practice Enhancer - Working with Street Entrenched Youth](#)

This Practice Enhancer was written by a young man formerly in MCFD care who once lived on the streets and has kindly agreed to share his experiences and insights.

[Guy - Permanency: Loving a Youth where they are at \(video\)](#)

Guy used his personal experience of being in fifteen plus homes to decipher some of the complexities within a kid in care. He shares his story and knowledge to help guide workers of all kinds through the difficulties of creating healthy relationships with at risk youth in care.

[Raven - Aboriginal Youth in Care \(video\)](#)

Raven discusses the cultural, physical, spiritual, and mental needs of Aboriginal Youth in care and how to ensure these needs are met.

[Ashley - Siblings: A Bond that Never Ends \(video\)](#)

Ashley talks about being separated from her siblings while in care and how it affected her. She talks about how brothers and sisters are the longest family you'll have and how different foster care would have been if she was with her siblings.



“

"We are all passionate about creating change in the system, as well as ensuring that there is a youth presence within the Ministry."

Ashley McMullin

”

“

"It (YAC) made a huge difference in my life, it made me feel important, and that the work that we are doing as a whole is important. I loved everything we have done so far, the parts dedicated to work, and the other parts focused on self-care or fun."

Tim Bolton

”

“

"I like the bonds and experiences that we all share even though we hadn't met previously."

Sara Poirier

”

Learnings from Running a Youth Advisory Council

Starting a Youth Advisory Council can bring exciting opportunities for young people to get involved, take action, raise awareness and become passionate leaders in their community. YAC members shared their experience of what worked well during the first year, what they would like to keep, change and add.

KEEP

- **200% keep Kym Stogan**
- **Monthly phone calls**
- **Face to face meetings**
- **Food and snacks**
- **Finding amazing opportunities**
- **Connection to staff and Elders**
- **Cory, Allison, Audrey, Chelsea and Brenda are vital and very important**
- **Facebook updates**
- **Involvement in planning permanency forum and preparing workshops**

CHANGE

- **Catering**
- **4 face to face meetings instead of 3**
- **Arrive in Victoria earlier for weekend meetings or stay later**
- **Begin workshop planning sooner**

ADD

- **Training how to log hours, complete travel claims, use zoom**
- **More social media**
- **More consultation on new policies/training**
- **Stronger social media presence**
- **Review for each face to face meeting**
- **YAC logo**
- **Business cards**
- **Stronger public presence or knowledge of what YAC does**
- **Swag... hoodies, pens, books, shirts, water bottles**
- **Doodle poll for monthly/weekly meetings**
- **Organization for opportunities**
- **More contact**
- **A way to keep in contact with members not coming back**

Feedback from YAC when running YAC Council...

Ensure that we have opportunities to celebrate the diverse skills and areas of expertise and interests of the council.

Ensure that when people are connected to council, and because the work we do can sometimes be triggering, that there is an adult in the community for each person whom they can connect with regularly

Provide workshops to develop skills in how to share our stories and talk about our identity in presentations and panels

Provide group development workshops on group dynamics to help build teamwork skills and capacity for YAC.

Have optional, but fun/relaxing activities planned at face to face meetings to encourage rest and relationship building.



My Experience on the YAC...

My name is Raven, and I am 25 years old. The past year with the Youth Advisory Council for the Provincial Director of Child Welfare has been absolutely incredible. I feel that I have been able to take complete ownership over my identity and my past with the YAC. The team helping support this growth is



the 20 youth advisors in and from care, ministry employees, executives (this sounds a lot less personal than it actually is), and other connections with people involved with MCFD from across the province. These people are some of the most supportive, compassionate, and dedicated people I have ever met. Each member of the team has the chance to be involved in various activities, events, panels, teams, projects, and workshops.

My involvement with the YAC started in June 2015, when I was introduced at the Guardianship Forum along with five other Youth Advisors. Following this, we had our first meeting with all of the Youth Advisory Council in Victoria in September. During this meeting, we discussed the issues that matter most to us, created ideas for action plans on how we want these issues addressed,

and had the chance to bond with the other youth - sharing our stories with one another. Throughout the year, we met in person three times and have virtual meetings once a month.

Since the first meeting, I was invited to several events and projects. Some of these have included being the youth voice on project teams such as the Youth Transitions project, sitting on a panel for Grand Chief Ed John's Custom Adoption Forum, presenting my story for social workers and ministry employees, and creating a workshop for the Permanency Forum in September. All of these opportunities have created quite a bit of space for self-reflection and have provided powerful connections with those from similar situations and those who want to take action to make a better world for youth in care.

Overall, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with YAC and am looking forward to the experiences I will be able to have this year. The YAC has given me new family members, connections, and a chance to do something positive with my experience. I am so proud of the work, the "fosta-gang", have done. We are seeing real change in MCFD - it is already happening.

My name is Jo-Mary. Many of us were strangers to each other at our first meeting, but our bond continues to grow with every phone call and gathering. Even though the distance was great, the hard work was greater. With such a supportive team, the council members have accomplished the many goals and tasks that were put in front of them. Our voices have been heard on a large number of issues that have affected the many youths in care. We have offered our advice from sexual health posters to co-hosting the Permanency forum which just recently took place in Richmond, BC.

Educating those involved with the system was one of our main goals. Throughout the year, individual members joined different groups to add the Youth Advisory Council voice to the discussion. Those committees bounced from Agreements with Young Adults expansion, Youth in Care Week working group, Aboriginal Advisory Committee, and those were only a few we had our hands and minds involved with.

One of our biggest achievements was the Permanency Forum where we were able to fully aid the creation of the few days that would touch many people's hearts and practices. One of our members' designs was even chosen to be the beautiful logo that was displayed throughout the conference. A few other areas that the council members appeared in were the MCs, workshops hosts, and in our own little World Cafés telling our story.

As our first year came to a close, the Youth Advisory Council has accomplished many goals with a mixture of laughter and tears. The council is continuing on for another year, we have added to our lovely family and can't wait to continue on with our work to improve the foster care system for all those involved.



My name is Bryant. I would like to start this reflection of sorts by vocalizing my gratitude for all the opportunities, support, empowerment, and friendships which I have been blessed with since the



formation of this group. This last year has been a journey of epic proportions, and my heart is truly full. We have laughed, cried, debated, comforted, and ultimately encouraged each other to be the best advocates we can be. It is almost ironic that we were asked to be a part of this group to help others, when in the end, it was ourselves who received the most medicine. The council was an idea that grew into a team, which grew into a family of equally passionate youth. We had all been broken in our own ways, and through our work, we found opportunities to turn the brokenness into our strengths. We cannot take all the credit though. Underneath these amazing

changes was our amazing facilitators who have went above and beyond to accommodate us and make sure we weren't tokenized. We have not only been given the space to speak, but to grow and evolve as well.

One of my biggest fears when I joined this group was that we would be put in some isolated room somewhere, given some markers, and told to make youth friendly posters for initiatives the ministry would tell us to support. In the last year, we have flown all over the province speaking at numerous conferences, forums, and media events. We have had meetings with MCFD executives, Grand Chiefs, the B.C. Coroner, and many other service providers who genuinely sought out our opinions on important issues. We have created/facilitated workshops, trained social workers, reviewed policies/practices, and have been allowed to boldly express our approval or disapproval of anything we were a part of or reviewed. Some of us were even hired on a more consistent basis! I am happy to say I was never given a marker to make a poster once.

One of the most incredible aspects of this whole YAC adventure to me has been the amazing connections we have made with each other. There is no love like the love you receive from those who know what it's like to live without it. These are my people and each one of them has a unique gift they bring to the table. This makes us the incredible team that we are, and I am proud and honored to fight the good fight alongside them.

The staff we have worked with in the duration of this year have also been exceptional. YAC members often talk about the importance of building connections when working with youth, and I am happy to say the people of the MCFD who we work with have epitomized this in every way. They simply gave us the space to grow, and nurture our inquisitive natures, which has proven to be very beneficial to the success of our entire group!

I would also like to have a way bigger focus on youth engagement. One of the biggest problems for youth in care is the lack of positive examples of people who have gone through the system and thrived. This can create the illusion that their situation is hopeless. I would like for our group to create a video, presentation, work shop or all of the above on youth in care resiliency. I would also like for us to be able to tell them quite simply "it's going to be ok". We can be living proof that you can face the darkest times and still come out on the other side intact. Lastly, I would really like for our group to help facilitate a youth led conference with other youth leaders as well as the numerous other YAC groups from other areas, offices, maybe even other sectors.

Last but certainly not least, I have to specially talk about one of the most incredible human beings I have ever had the pleasure of meeting... Kymberlee Stogan. Honestly, Kym is an aspect of our YAC group you could never duplicate or fully appreciate. Kym has become as engrained with us as you could possibly imagine and she's been absolutely instrumental in our success!

All in all, this has been one of the most amazing and life altering experiences of my life. I feel like I have grown five feet since being a part of this council, and I look forward to all the continued growth as we move forward together. You guys should know you have also done a great job. By providing this space/support you are helping heal a lot of people, and that is something you should be proud of as well. I admire your courage to be bold and to try something different.

Much love and respect!
Bryant



Feedback from Ministry Staff on YAC Involvement...

From the Child Welfare Policy Team

The Child Welfare Policy team would like to thank you for your input regarding posters for the public advising that specific groups of the male population are now eligible to receive the HPV vaccine free of charge. The reason we asked for your feedback was that originally males in MCFD care age 9-18 were included in a list of males who are considered “most vulnerable to the disease” such as street involved, men who have sex with men (MSM), and those living with HIV on the posters. Our team was concerned that including males in MCFD/DAA care into the same list of other male categories “most vulnerable to disease” may make children and youth in care feel marginalized.

The Ministry of Health and public health authorities of BC discussed that it is necessary to list the specific groups of males eligible to receive the vaccine at no cost on their posters. This is significant because not all males in British Columbia are between the age of 9-26 are eligible to receive the vaccine free of charge, the way all females are eligible within a certain age bracket. Given the feedback you submitted, we were able to present an alternative to the Health Authorities to not list males in care of MCFD/DAA in the same category as those they state are “most vulnerable to disease.” The feedback you provided included using the alternative word “eligible” and allowed us to request that the Ministry of Health and the Health Authorities make two separate lists on the posters.

From Jeannie MacPherson, Child Welfare Policy Team

As part of the consultation process for the newly revised *Children and Youth in Care Policies*, Bryant provided valuable feedback in his role as a Youth Advisory Council member. His perspective as a former youth in care helped inform the policies, particularly in the areas of social workers needing to maintain meaningful relationships with youth, the importance of making every effort to assist difficult to reach youth when preparing them for independence, the need for the Public Guardian and Trustee to assist youth with their financial affairs after they turn 19 years of age if it is determined that the youth is not capable of managing on their own, and that in situations where a youth is incarcerated, as much as possible workers need to continue to prepare the youth to live successfully in the community when they leave care.

From Breanna Viala, MCFD Strategic Priorities

We reviewed the creative concepts for the Caregiver Awareness and Recruitment project and received YAC input into how youth should be involved moving forward. We went ahead with profiling Guy and have received positive feedback of having a young adult’s voice as part of the campaign. We haven’t separated out the stats between Guy and the caregivers, but overall, the ads were viewed over 500,000 times online in BC. There were also radio ads and extensive informal sharing as well.

From Allison Bond, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery

It is so important that people delivering services understand the impact of those services on young people. The Youth Advisory Council offers the opportunity to put faces to experiences with the system. I can't over-state the impact that this has had on my supervisors and staff. When they hear the experiences of young people in and from care, they appreciate more the importance of what they do and how they do it. I often use the stories to illustrate the importance of the work and of critical pieces of the work, such as care plans and cultural connection.

I don't think I could talk about the value of the YAC without reflecting on the impact their stories have had on me personally and in my work. The thoughtful, introspective and reflective approach that the individual YAC members take ground me in the work. They tackle difficult systemic issues, and talk about those issues in a way that helps me understand the real impact. They teach me every time I have an opportunity to connect with them one on one. They are generous in sharing their lives and experiences, and they don't hesitate to put me in my place when I am thinking from my little corner of the world. Thank you to the YAC for keeping it real and making a difference.

From April Feduniw, Victoria Youth Guardianship & Youth Resources

I had really appreciated the involvement of the YAC in the youth transitions project at Strategic Priorities for many reasons. The YAC members were very genuine about their perspectives and opinions, and were very open to talking about their past experiences that have led them to the views they hold. They were also eager to learn, and willing team players, and also very clear about where their lack of understanding and challenges were throughout the process. This was very helpful because it allowed us to ensure that they were on the same page as everyone else who takes for granted the knowledge and experience we as adults have. It allowed for relationship building amongst the team, and for collaboration on specific topics. What I may have found the most valuable was their candidness and perhaps boldness of their views, while sharing these things in a very respectful way. It kept the topic "real", and it kept it meaningful. Too often "we" go forward in projects with our eyes on the end result- usually a report, or a program description, or even program implementation. What the YAC members were able to do was keep the objectives personal and tangible – for example, they continued to highlight who the target population was in detail and description, and how this would change and improve their lives. This brought things to a whole different level and increased the team morale and job satisfaction. There were many times sitting around a boardroom table that I would get goosebumps from the stories and ideas that the YAC members shared. I look forward to working with them again.

“YAC is... shared decision making, youth leadership, family, awesome.”
Ashley Frerichs

“We are a group with big hearts and even bigger determination.”
Ashley McMullin

“YAC is... Belonging, inspiration, information sharing, engagement, youth-adult partnerships, family, empowering, security, love, understanding.”
Aliah Gilbert



“We believe that there has long existed a gap between helping hands and broken hearts. However, if we work together and bridge this gap, we can set new structures into place that will create real growth as well as start the healing that is so needed. Change isn't easy, and if there's one thing our adversities have taught us it's that nothing worth having comes easily. Regardless, change is inevitable, and with a little bit of hope we can and we will achieve positive change together.”
Bryant Doradea



So very
THANKFUL



