

Message from the Advocate

As I settle into my new role as Child and Youth Advocate, I truly feel like 2017 is a time for new beginnings. I am very excited about the valuable work of this Office, and the commitment of those who work here. I immediately began an ongoing process of reaching out to the many individuals and organizations that work so hard for children and youth every day. Many of you visited our office and this is greatly appreciated. This engagement also involved a wonderful trip to Labrador which included visits to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Sheshatshiu and Nain. Thanks to everyone for being so gracious with your time, and enthusiastic about ways and means to make things better for our young people. Your energy has been very motivating.

While the Child and Youth Advocate is mandated to deal with many serious and critical issues regarding services and responses to children and youth, and this vital work will continue, I also want to celebrate the accomplishments of our young people in Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to ensure we remember the tremendous value our children and youth contribute in our families, communities, province, and country. We will be looking for ideas and approaches to do this, so feel free to provide your thoughts and suggestions. Our door is open, our emails are



Jackie Lake Kavanagh

read, and our phones are answered. We would love to hear from you.

And finally, but perhaps most importantly, you will regularly hear me making the case for involvement of young people in discussions about services and programs that affect them. I strongly believe in this. The individual and collective perspectives and experiences of youth are extremely valuable to all of us in mapping the path forward on issues related to children and youth. If adult voices are the only ones considered, we run a very real risk of not getting it right. So if I sound repetitive to you on this issue down the road, it is a badge I will wear with pride!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jackie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

What's New

It has been a very busy few months for our staff! We have focused on connecting and working collaboratively on important issues impacting children and youth in our province. We would like to extend special thanks to the following people who shared their time and came to our office to provide information sessions, training, or consult with staff:

Dr. David Phillipot, Premier's Task Force on Improved Educational Outcomes

Angela Crockwell, THRIVE-Community Youth Network

Tammy Earle, Public Service Commission

Paul Thomey and Patricia Nash, Eating Disorder Foundation of NL

Mallary McGrath, Planned Parenthood-NL Sexual Health Centre

Heidi Dixon, St. John's Native Friendship Centre

Marie Keefe and Bobbi Russell, House of Assembly

And thanks to those who opened their doors, and extended a gracious welcome or dropped in to meet with the new Advocate to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern:

Sheldon Pollett, Choices for Youth

David Diamond, Eastern Health

Lisa Crockwell, NL Association of Social Workers

Susan McLeod, Tuckamore Centre

Ellen Oliver, Child Death Review Committee

Dr. Donna Hardy-Cox, School of Social Work

Linda Ross, Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Key Assets

RNC

RCMP

Office of the Information Privacy Commissioner

Office of the Citizens' Representative

Department of Justice and Public Safety

Department of Health and Community Services

Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour

Newfoundland English School District

We have been very pleased to participate in the following activities between January to March, 2017:

- Relationships First: Restored Justice, Restored Hope -THRIVE professional development series
 - Eating Disorder Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador AGM
 - Planned Parenthood - NL Sexual Health Centre In House Session
 - Vicarious Trauma, Employee Assistance Program In House Session
 - Eating Disorder Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador - In House Session
 - Fentanyl Addictions Treatment Services Association
 - St. John's Local Immigration Partnership Forum
 - Canadian Association of Social Workers - Youth and Marijuana Webinar Series
 - Developing Inter-Agency Collaboration that Works
 - Social Media Policy and Content Development, Community Sector Council
 - Refugee Mental Health: Responding to Trauma and Displacement
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Pink It Up, OCYA Staff

- Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma
- Trauma Informed Practice, THRIVE Professional Development Series
- Aboriginal Cultural Diversity Training, St. John's Native Friendship Centre
- Community Based Drug Treatment Program for Youth in Conflict with the Law, Justice Canada
- Medical Assistance in Dying, Canadian Association of Social Workers

PINK IT UP!

On February 22, 2017 our Office extended a challenge to PINK IT UP by wearing pink to show support for our young people and raise awareness of the systemic issue of bullying. A number of individuals and groups throughout the province stepped up to the challenge and we were delighted with the pictures we received. Check out the pictures on our website at

www.childandyouthadvocate.nf.ca

THE COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

Community walks took place throughout Canada on February 25, 2017 to raise awareness and funds for youth organizations working with vulnerable youth. Our Office was delighted to enter a team for this year's Coldest Night of the Year event in St. John's that fundraised for Choices for Youth.

Our team captain Jillian Freeman organized our participation which included Karen Gray, Jacob Kimball, Andrew Mallam, and Jackie Lake Kavanagh. All funds for this event went to Choices for Youth, a great local organization that supports at-risk and homeless youth with secure stable housing, education and employment. We were happy to have raised \$1204.37 and contributed to the overall total of \$48,700.00 for Choices. Thanks to all financial sponsors and moral supporters who contributed to this effort.



Coldest Night, OCYA Staff

RCMP UNIT COMMANDERS' MEETING

The RCMP invited the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to present at their Unit Commanders' meeting on March 7, 2017. We were very pleased to participate in this meeting of approximately 30 senior officers from Headquarters and various regions of the province.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN PANEL DISCUSSION

On March 6, 2017 the Child and Youth Advocate's Office participated in the panel discussion as part of the Health and Well-Being of Children Module offered through the Centre for Collaborative Health Professional Education at Memorial University's School of Medicine. The primary aim of this inter-professional education module was to introduce students to principles and concepts of inter-professional teamwork with children at risk and their families. This module is 'inter-professional' in that students learn, interact and collaborate with their peers from other professional education programs. The panel allowed the class participants to view a facilitated case conference chaired by the Advocate's office bringing a variety of disciplines to the table to discuss service provision, case planning and collaborative practice. This is an annual event and the Advocate's office is delighted to participate.

Out and About

There is nothing quite as exhilarating as a trip to Labrador in February! We travelled to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Sheshatshiu and Nain and had the opportunity to meet with some pretty incredible people. We visited various services, agencies and programs and met with very dedicated people at the community level. We had an insightful and positive meeting with Innu youth at the Youth Centre in Sheshatshiu. These young people have inspired us to develop a way to help Aboriginal youth to tell their story. We also met with some parents who were experiencing difficulty with the system. We would like to extend a sincere and heartfelt thank-you for the warm welcome and meaningful conversations we had with everyone we met during this trip. We consider this the beginning of many future visits and conversations.

This is where our travels took us between February 27 and March 3:

Happy Valley Goose Bay

Nunatsiavut Government, Department of Health and Social Development

Mokami Status of Women Centre

Labrador Friendship Centre

Memorial University's Labrador Institute

Sheshatshiu

Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation Band Council and Chief Hart's Office

Charles J. Andrew Treatment Centre

Department of Health and Social Development

Mary May Healing Centre

Apenam Pone House Treatment Centre

Shushepishipan Group Home

Ussiniun Youth Centre

Innu Round Table

Nain

Family Connections Program

Jens Haven School

Family Resources Centre

Martin & Martin Group Home

Nunatsiavut Government, Ordinary Member
Richard Pamak

Community Freezer

Jackie Lake Kavanagh, Child and Youth Advocate

Karen Gray, Director of Individual Advocacy and Outreach Services



Ussiniun Youth Centre, Sheshatshiu

The Sheshatshiu Youth Centre:

On June 21, 2016 the children and youth of Sheshatshiu Labrador cut the ribbon to open their brand new youth centre high atop the hill overlooking the pristine waters of Lake Melville. On February 28, 2017 the Child and Youth Advocate and Director were honored to be provided with the opportunity to tour the centre and meet with staff and many young people who use the centre on a regular basis. Amanda Rich, the centre manager spoke with great pride about what having such a facility means to the community and how important the services and supports are to the children and youth but also to the community as whole. Built by local citizens, the Ussinun

Centre is an amazing structure- handcrafted and breathtaking. Approximately 70 or more young people visit daily and participate in cultural and social activities, celebrations, sports, completing academic work, getting help with school work or they just hang out with friends and play games or music in a safe and welcoming environment. The youth of Sheshatshiu are very proud of their community resource and they speak to how wonderful it is to be able to come there every day and hang out with friends playing, learning sharing and feeling like they have a place to call their own.

Karen Gray

Right to Culture

Article 30 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* is about the right to culture. All children and youth have the right to practice their own culture, language and religion. Below are some examples of how you can promote and respect this important right in your everyday activities:

- Show interest by asking friends, co-workers, students about their culture; ask them to teach you a few words in their language;
- Organize or ask for cultural awareness sessions in school or at work;
- Help celebrate cultures that are different than yours (try the food, listen to the music, learn about special holidays or religious observances).

Repeal Section 43

In February, OCYA wrote to members of the Senate strongly urging them to support of Bill S-206 which would repeal Section 43 of the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Repealing this law will enable stronger protections for children against acts of violence and abuse. Physical punishment is the most common form of violence against children and can escalate into more severe forms of violence. Canada has repeatedly been criticized by the United Nations for its failure to repeal Section 43. As a modern and progressive democratic nation, and as a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Canada lags behind more than 50 countries that have prohibited all physical punishment of children, and more than 50 additional countries that have committed to do so.

Name the Newsletter Contest

We are planning to change the name of this newsletter and would love to hear your creative suggestions. Please e-mail us at office@ocya.nl.ca with your ideas.



We Need Your Help!

To ensure we reach children and youth and the public, please contact us to add your name to our distribution list and we will send copies as requested.

Contact the Advocate for Children & Youth if you or someone you know is in need of help:

Phone: (709) 753-3888 • Toll Free: 1-877-753-3888

TTY: (709) 753-4366 • Fax: (709) 753-3988 • Email: office@ocya.nl.ca

WebSite: www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca

Or drop by and speak with someone in our office:

193 LeMarchant Road, St. John's, NL • A1C 2H5 • Mon-Fri 8:30 am - 4:30 pm