

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

Listening Tour 2017-18

Newfoundland and Labrador

Clarenville

Old Perlican

Corner Brook

St. Mary's

Deer Lake

Sheshatshiu

Dildo

South Dildo

Grand Falls-Windsor

Stephenville

Harbour Grace

St. John's

Mobile

Trepassey

Mount Carmel

Western Bay

Mount Pearl

Whitbourne

We Heard You!



CHILDREN | YOUTH
NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

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Child and Youth Advocate's Message



As a young person, you have rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty that Canada signed many years ago. Here at the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, we are best able to advocate and to speak up with you and for you when we understand your reality. When we work on children and youth rights, we need to understand your experiences.

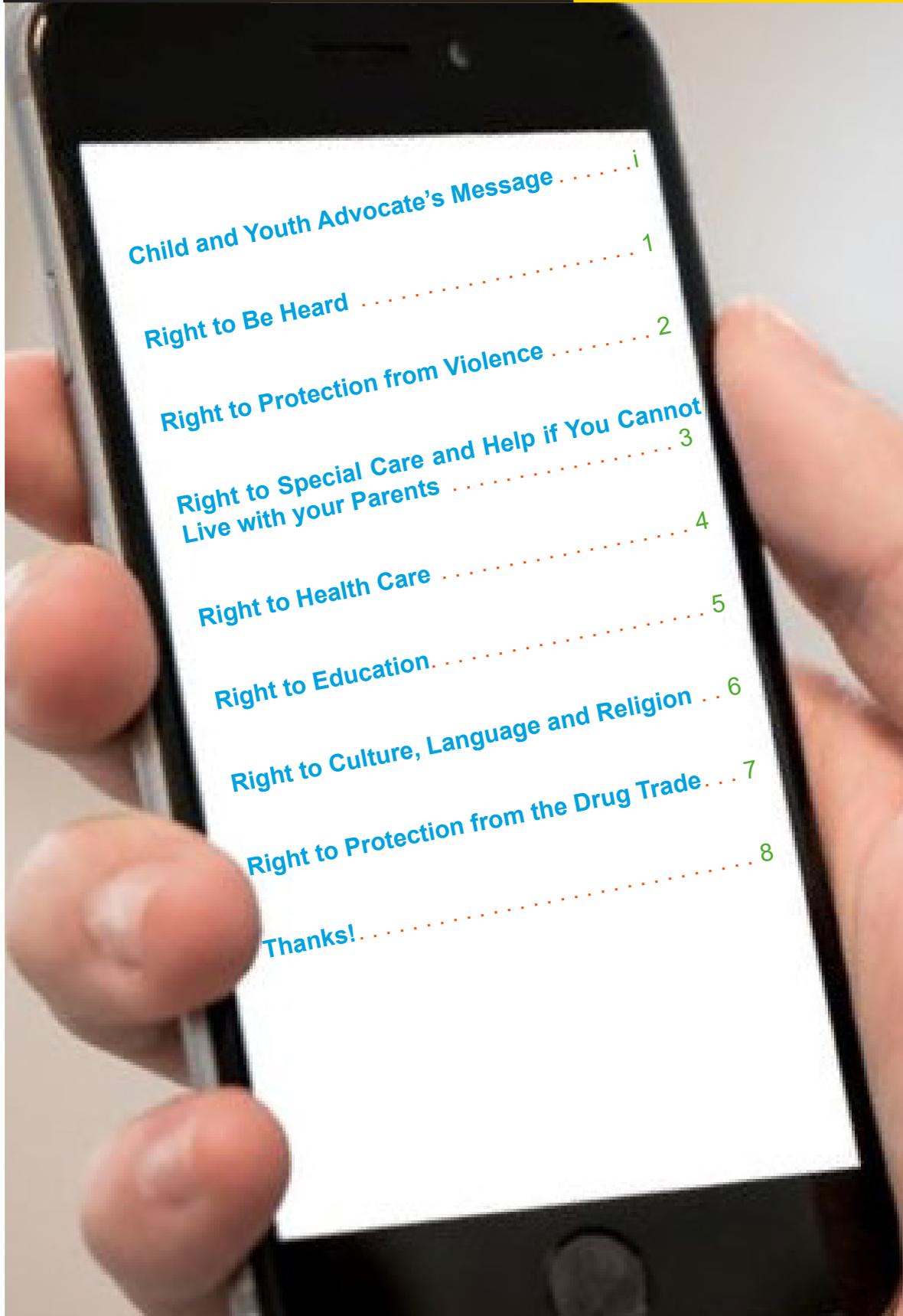
So we set out to hear directly from you, and we listened. In fact, we listened to 550 of you in many communities. And we were very impressed by your insights, your concerns, your passion, and your compassion. Many of you are leaders both formally and informally.

The next few pages show the issues and rights we asked you about, and some of your responses. Thanks for spending time with us and for sharing your ideas and experiences. We are happy to share your voices.


Jacqueline Lake Kavanagh
Child and Youth Advocate

**“You are braver than you believe,
stronger than you seem,
and smarter than you think.”
- A.A. Milne/Christopher Robin**

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Know Your Rights

As part of our public education role, we regularly post rights from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These can be found by visiting our website:

<https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nf.ca/KnowYourRights.htm>

Article 12

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

“Ms. is an awesome teacher. She listens to us.”

“I could go to Ms. [teacher] if I had a problem.”

“It seems as though we’re a number. Our opinions aren’t heard.”

“No one asked me who I’d rather live with.”

“Children deserve to be heard by all.”

“The president of our student council can speak for the students at the school council meetings.”

“The adults say there will be no judgment but there is.”

“My teacher told me I don’t have any rights.”

Are You Heard?

You told us you had different experiences in this area. Some of you said you felt confident adults listened to you, while others felt adults do not take your opinions seriously.

Article 19

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Bullying and Harassment

We heard clearly that bullying is a very real and challenging issue for many youth in NL. You said you need adults to help you and for them to be consistent in their responses to bullying and harassment.

“Bullying or sexual harassment is not ok.”

“I feel like we are expected to deal with situations on our own.”

“I am not comfortable going to a teacher or the principal.”

“When I told a teacher about the bullying it just got worse.”

“Parents handle online bullying wrong: they blame the person being bullied, but it’s not their fault.”

“Teachers usually deal with bullying when they hear about it.”

“I went to a teacher and nothing changed so I went to the principal and it was dealt with immediately.”

“We participated in Pink Shirt day.”

Your Rights:

Right to Special Care and Help if You Cannot Live with your Parents

Article 20

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

“Advice to Social Workers: Listen to what the young person has to say and always be honest.”

“I’m afraid my mom will die if I advocate too much to protect my little sister.”

“I got out of the shower and I was told I wouldn’t be going to school today. I was moving to a new group home.”

“The core staff at the group home are really good.”

“It would be better if the teacher quietly told you to go to the office rather than having it announced on the P.A.”

“Social workers take you out of class. They don’t smile. They do not ask how your day was.”

“If the social worker has to come to school they should come between classes or right after lunch so it’s less noticeable that you were taken out of class.”

Child Protection and In Care Services

This was a very sensitive area to talk about. Some of you who had received child protection services had lived experience to share. There are clear lessons in your comments for professionals and care givers.

Article 24

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Youth Mental Health

You were clear that you need improved access to services and you need adults to take these issues seriously and make it happen.

“Adults think we’re just acting out for attention.”

“Even the doctor didn’t take me seriously.”

“There are a lot of students with mental health issues – particularly anxiety.”

“A lot of alcohol and drug use is to help deal with anxiety and depression.”

I don’t think I should be suspended from school for having a panic attack.”

“We saw one presentation on anxiety and depression that was good. Otherwise, we don’t receive much information on how to deal with it.”

“A list of resources should be made available for parents and teachers at the beginning of each year.”

“I missed three months of school due to anxiety and depression.”

Article 28

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

“Anyone who is not from [the town where the school is located] is treated differently.”

“What if I need to speak to someone on a day that our guidance counsellor is at another school?”

“It’s so crowded at this school that students are eating lunch in the hallways.”

“The assistant at school said something mean to me. That shouldn’t be allowed.”

“The education system has a long way to go regarding understanding attendance issues as they relate to mental health.”

“Detention makes more sense than suspension. A lot of the students who get suspended don’t want to be there anyway.”

“It affects us when a teacher we like is moved to a different school because of cuts.”

“Were it not for the peer counsellors, I wouldn’t have any tutoring.”

Education Supports

You told us your education is important to you. You also told us you need more supports to attend school and to be successful in school.

Article 30

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Celebrating Culture

Many of you talked about how important it is to have opportunities to learn about and celebrate culture - both your own and others.

"We want to be able to stay in our community."

"Our culture makes us feel strong and proud."

"Our school does a great job teaching us about culture."

"Indigenous drumming groups create pride and understanding."

"Our language is being introduced to the school curriculum."

"A lot of the art in school shows our culture."

"The Cultural Powwow at school builds pride and awareness."

"I have the right to pray."

"There's a 3 day cultural program for youth at a lodge."

"We need to respect their beliefs if we expect them to respect our beliefs."

Your Rights:

Right to Protection from the Drug Trade

Article 33

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

“A lot of alcohol and drug use is to help deal with anxiety and depression.”

“Drugs affect family life. We can get anything we want. Youth have addictions issues and are buying drugs with their lunch money.”

“Presentations alone don't work.”

“People need to find out what is behind the drug use in order to solve the problem.”

“There is not enough talk of harm reduction when using alcohol or drugs. They tell us not to do it and that is it.”

“Adults stick a tag on you once you are known as doing drugs or drinking.”

“Drug use is normalized here. Smoking a joint is like brushing your teeth.”

“It's easy to get drugs.”

Drugs and Alcohol

We heard that drugs are a real issue for you. Drugs are in your communities and in your schools. You want more done to address the reasons why young people turn to drugs, and help when they do.

Thanks!

Thanks to all the young people who contributed to this project. We are happy to share your views and perspectives, and we are committed to helping your voice get heard. While the rights we discussed together are really important, they represent a small number from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. You can learn more about the rights of children and youth by going to <https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/KnowYourRights.htm>.

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Thank You

Listening Tour Promotions

Allied Youth NL
Baccalieu Collegiate
Boys and Girls Clubs of St. John's
Cabot Academy
Choices for Youth
Community Education Network,
Corner Brook
Corner Brook Regional High School
Crescent Collegiate
NLESD District School
Dunne Memorial Academy
Elwood Regional High School
Exploits Valley Intermediate
Mobile Central High School
Mount Pearl Senior High
Newfoundland and Labrador Youth
Centre
PFLAG NL
Qalipu Youth Group
St. Catherine's Academy
Sharing Our Cultures
Stella Maris Academy
The Splash Centre
Thrive, CYN
Ussiniun Youth Centre
Waypoints
Woodland Elementary
Youthtube CYN
Youth 2000 Centre