

Message from the Child and Youth Advocate



Hi Friends,

I am really excited to send along the latest edition of our newsletter which is focused on children and youth rights. As a young person, you may often hear people talk about children's rights, but sometimes it is hard to know just what this means. So we thought it would be a good idea to focus on the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** and discuss a few of those rights so you can get a better sense of what they mean. Every child and youth in Canada has these rights under the Convention....no exceptions!

The folks in my office work to help protect children and youth rights every day. This can mean helping to advocate on your behalf to make sure your rights are respected. It can mean investigating complaints. And it can mean helping people to better understand children and youth rights. To do this, we offer presentations, workshops, resource materials, we share information through Twitter, and we're sometimes on the news.

If we can help you with your rights, or if you have questions, please reach out to us. You will receive a friendly, respectful response and we will listen to what you have to say.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jackie".

Jacqueline Lake Kavanagh
Child and Youth Advocate

What Are Rights?

Did you know that every child and youth in Canada has rights under the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC)? Other laws and policies also give you rights. Rights are standards (like a set of rules) that describe how young people are entitled to be treated. They ensure young people can live, grow and develop in dignity, and to their maximum potential.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** provides protection for the rights of all Canadian children and youth under the age of 18. It is the most widely supported international human rights treaty in the world and the most complete statement of children's human rights. It recognizes that as a young person, you need special and dedicated protection of your rights in order to be able to develop to your full potential.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Child and Youth Advocate can help with your rights up to your 19th birthday, or up to your 21st birthday if you are in a care or custody arrangement. It can be helpful to see that children and youth rights under the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** are organized along the following themes or groups of rights:

1

Protection

from harm such as abuse, violence, and exploitation of any kind

2

Provision

of adequate resources for healthy development such as food, shelter, clean water, health care, education and play

3

Participation

by exercising civic rights without discrimination such as expressing views, speaking up on matters that directly affect their lives and futures, or sharing in decision making.



Your Rights Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 1

Everyone under 18 has these rights.

Article 3

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Article 5

Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.

Article 8

You have the right to an identity – an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.

Article 2

All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 4

The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.

Article 6

You have the right to be alive.

Article 7

You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

Article 9

You have the right to live with your parent(s), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.

Article 10

If you live in a different country than your parents, you have the right to be together in the same place.

Article 11

You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.

Article 12

You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

Article 13

You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 14

You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

Article 15

You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

Article 16

You have the right to privacy.



Did you know that you have a right to be heard?

You've probably heard the saying "Nothing about us, without us". Well that is what Article 12 of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** is all about. You have the right to express your views, give your opinion, have your voice heard, and for adults to listen and take it seriously in matters that affect you. Your experiences, ideas, and perspectives are important to consider when decisions are being made about you. Without your input, it can be hard for adults to make the best decisions about you. You should be invited to participate in these discussions in ways that are appropriate for your age, and you should have the information and supports to help you participate. You have a right to be heard. That does not mean that you will always get what you want, but it does mean that you have a right to express your view and have your opinion considered. Ultimately decisions must be made in your best interest, and that is most likely to happen when you have been part of the discussion whenever possible.

If you need help getting heard, ask an adult that you trust to help you, or call our office. And if you believe your rights are not being protected or if you want to make a complaint that you want us to look into, contact us at the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. We will hear you and listen to your concerns.

Check out our contact information on the back.

Article 17

You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.

Article 18

You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.

Article 19

You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

Article 20

You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.

Article 21

You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.

Right to be Safe from Abuse and Exploitation

Did you know the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** states that you have the right to be free from abuse and exploitation? Abuse can take on many forms and includes physical and sexual harm, mental abuse, and neglect. Abuse and exploitation is about power and control. It is never acceptable and, if it has happened to you, it is not your fault. Sadly, for some young people, this occurs in their own home, a place where they should feel safe. It also means that someone may try to take advantage of you for their own gain. Someone may exploit you by tricking you to perform sexual acts online and then demand you do more of it, or they may threaten to send messages and images to your family and friends about what you have done, or demand money from you. They may draw you into the drug trade and then demand you sell drugs or other illegal items, or they will report you to the police or hurt you. They may lure you in to their activities through another young person who they are also exploiting and threatening, so you may not see the risk at first.

With so much social isolation occurring over the past year, there has been less access to friends, extended family members, neighbours, or other adults outside the home such as those at school. This does not mean you are alone. If you have experienced abuse or exploitation, reach out to an adult you trust to help you. Here are some contacts:

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

To report a concern of abuse, call the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development toll-free 1-833-552-2368 or contact your local police.

Kids Help Phone: Call 1-800-668-6868 or visit KidsHelpPhone.ca. Available 24 hours a day in French and English. Youth can be anonymous and will receive professional counselling, information and referrals.

Crisis Text Line (powered by Kids Help Phone): Children, youth and young adults can text 'CONNECT' to 686868 to a trained volunteer Crisis Responder who will help with any issues – big or small. The service is free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day.

Bridge the gapp <https://www.bridgethegapp.ca/>

Article 22

You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

Article 23

You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life.

Article 24

You have the right to the best healthcare possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

Article 25

If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

Article 26

You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

Article 27

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

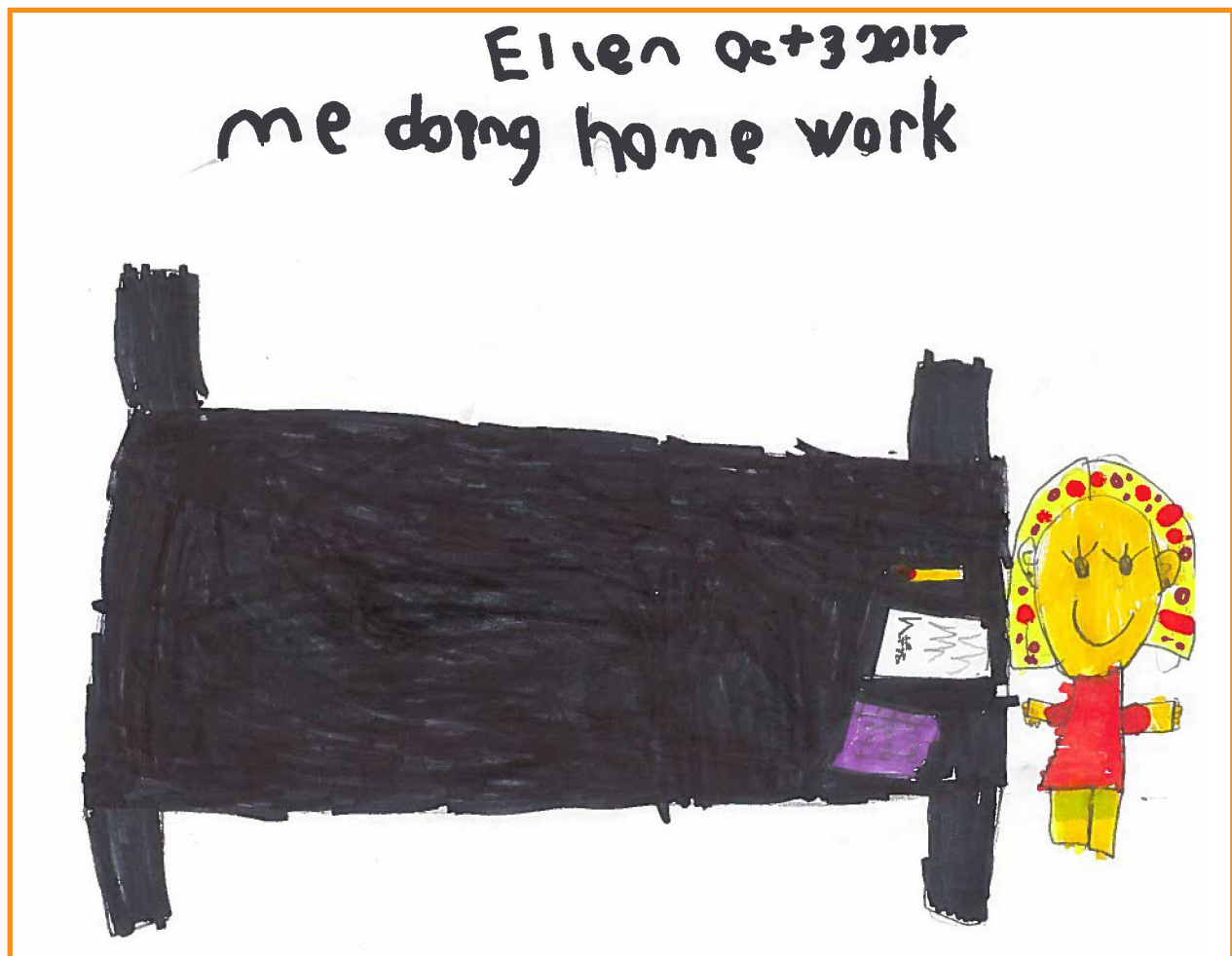


Right to Education

Did you know the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** states that you have the right to a quality education? This means that you should be supported and encouraged to develop to your maximum potential. Education services should do what is best for you (what is in your best interests) and part of this means you have the right to participate in decisions that affect you. Your education should help you develop who you are, and inspire your talents and abilities. These talents and abilities look different for different people, and that's okay.

Your education should also help you understand your rights, and to respect other people's rights, cultures and differences. School must be free from violence and discrimination because you learn best when you feel safe and secure. Your education should help you reach your potential, live peacefully, and protect others and the world around you.

You may have heard of Malala Yousafzai and her book **I am Malala**. She is a young Pakistani activist who has fought for girls' right to education. In some parts of the world, girls are prohibited from going to school. She survived a violent attack in 2012 for speaking out against restrictions on girls' education. In 2014 she became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize.



Article 28

You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

Article 29

Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

Article 30

You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

Article 31

You have the right to play and rest.

Article 32

You have the right to protection from work that harms you, and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

Article 33

You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

Article 35

No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

Article 34

You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

Article 36

You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

Article 37

No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way.

Article 38

You have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

Article 39

You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

Article 40

You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.

Article 41

If the laws of your country provide better protection of your rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

Article 42

You have the right to know your rights! Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.

Articles 43-52

These articles explain how governments and international organizations like UNICEF will work to ensure children are protected with their rights.

Right to Culture and Religion

Canada is a country rich in diversity, and has been built on a foundation of diverse peoples. Did you know the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** states that you have the right to practice your own culture, language, and religion? You have a right to celebrate who you are, where you come from, and what you believe in.

In recent years, there has been a growing understanding of the strength and beauty of Indigenous cultures. However discrimination against Indigenous people is still a major problem and this means all of us have lots of work to do to be part of making things right. If you watch the news, you also see stories where members of religious groups are targeted because of their beliefs. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we have seen communities rally together to support members of religious groups that have been victims of violence and hatred. We have seen schools celebrate the diversity of their students. This is important because you have the right to practice your culture and religion without fear or violence.

Right to be Free from Discrimination

Did you know the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** states that you have a right to be protected from discrimination of any kind? It doesn't matter who you are, where you live, what language you speak, what religion you practice, what your ethnicity or culture is, your sex or how you identify or express your gender, your ability status, how much money you have (or if you have any at all), who your family is or what they believe in or do. You should not be treated unfairly for any reason. All children and youth should be valued and treated with respect. This is your right.

We love our diversity poster and believe it sends a powerful message. Contact us for a copy. It has been translated into French, Innu-aimun (both Mushuau and Sheshatshiu dialects), Inuktitut and Mi'kmaq.

“To every child - I dream of a world where you can laugh, dance, sing, learn, live in peace, and be happy.”

Malala Yousafzai



This is a Positive Space that Welcomes and Supports Everyone

Cet endroit est un espace positif qui accueille et soutient tout le monde

Ula na tett ta'n pasik wen wla'sulaten aqq apoqnuaten

Enkuenu uta tshishue kamashtashatsheneshkatshet kie kamashta uauitshiakent mishiue auen

Ekuta ute minuenitakuak tshetshi uauitshikanit kassinu auen

Tamanna piujummagik iniuvuk tujummiKujingitumik amma ikajotigijautluni kinakkutuinnanut

Compliments of the
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Want to learn more?

It's our job to ensure the **RIGHTS** of children and youth are respected and protected.

CONTACT US!

- ✓ We can advocate and also provide information and advice if you have concerns.
- ✓ We offer education sessions to children, youth, and professionals.
- ✓ We have resources that we are happy to send you, or you can check them out by visiting our website.

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

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The Rights Articles throughout this newsletter are from the Unicef poster which can be found at:

https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/files/onventionOnTheRightsOfTheChild_poster.pdf