

The Youth Council is hard at work helping the OCYA stand up for young people! They are the foundation of our advocacy efforts. They amplify young people's voices, help increase our understanding of their experiences within government systems and lead positive change. The youth council has been working on several projects including:

- > Understanding the experiences of Black and African children in the child welfare system and attending anti-racism training.
- > Collaboration on an art piece with artist duo LALA that uses imagery, colours, and words to capture the hope and imagination of young people.
- > Reaching out to young people in the child welfare system to ask what information would have been helpful for them to get when they entered care.

**If you would like to know more about these projects, please email the council directly at [youthcouncil@ocya.alberta.ca](mailto:youthcouncil@ocya.alberta.ca).**

## **WHO ARE WE? The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) stands up for young people!**

We help young people in Alberta succeed in their lives and communities by...

**Educating them about their rights and helping them to speak up.**

**Asking them what is important to them.**

**Helping them resolve what they are worried about.**

**Supporting them in being heard by decision-makers in child welfare and the youth justice system.**



## A message from our Indigenous Engagement Team

Oki, Tansi, Danit'ada, Âba wathtec, Paarutit and Hello from the Indigenous Engagement Team at the OCYA! Our team includes a Knowledge Keeper and two Indigenous Engagement staff. Our job is to connect with young people and the communities where they are from. We believe in the importance of young people being connected to their culture. Whether you're curious about Indigenous ways, or are experienced and looking to share, our team is looking forward to connecting with you throughout your journey with the OCYA! Email us at [education@ocya.alberta.ca](mailto:education@ocya.alberta.ca) to connect.

### Would you like to know more about your culture? Talk to your caseworker or caregivers about:

- > Taking part in a ceremony like smudging or a sweat lodge.
- > Learning to dance or sing or taking part in a talking circle.
- > Taking a language class or sitting with an elder to learn about the 7 teachings.
- > Spending time on the land or going medicine picking.



**SPEAK  
UP!**

“I heard a lot about reconnecting with my culture growing up in the system. I was told I have rights. I didn't know this meant my family, smudging and the stories of my ancestors. My advocate helped me to find meaning in these rights that fit with who I am, my spirit and my people. They learned with me about the ceremonies I had missed as a young child. They helped me find what had been missing for so long.”

16-year-old Indigenous youth

## Ask the OCYA!

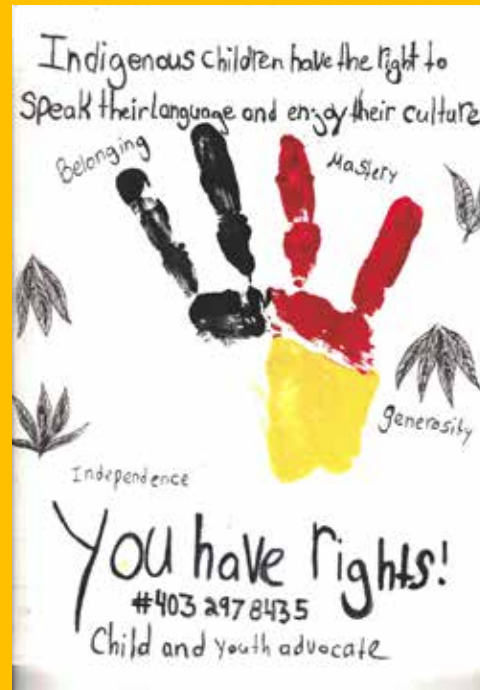
**My caseworker says that decisions about my file are now being made under the Act Respecting or Bill C92. What does that mean?** Alex, 12-years-old

Bill C-92: An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families is a law that says Indigenous peoples get to decide what happens to their children who are involved with Child and Family Services. From babies to young people transitioning to adulthood, this law says that Indigenous culture is very important, and everyone should do everything they can for young people to stay with or be returned to their family and communities. It says that any decision or plan made about you must respect your Indigenous culture, ceremony, language, and the land where you came from.

**Please reach out to Intake at 1-800-661-3446 if you have more questions!**

# Young People Expressing Themselves Through Art

National Child Day Art Contest Submissions





## Self-Advocacy Tips

Speaking up for what you want or how you feel can be hard and make you nervous. Advocacy can happen through an email, phone call or a meeting. It is good to be prepared. Try these simple self-advocacy tips:

1. Plan out what you are going to say in advance.
2. Listen carefully to what other people are saying.
3. Write notes including what questions you would like answered.
4. Invite a supportive person along for encouragement - someone who helps you feel safe and calm.

There may be times that you are not successful no matter how hard you try. Try not to get discouraged and keep practicing these skills!



**Watch our Youth Participation Video!**

## If you are involved with the youth justice or child welfare systems:

- You have rights!
- The OCYA can help you understand what to expect and provide advocacy if your rights are not being supported.

**If you have questions about your rights as a young person or need support to speak out, we're here for you.**

**Call us!** 1-800-661-3446

**Email us!** [ca.information@OCYA.alberta.ca](mailto:ca.information@OCYA.alberta.ca)

