



16-YEAR-OLD FLORENCE

AN INVESTIGATIVE REVIEW

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, Alberta
February 2026

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under my authority and duty as identified in Section 9(2)(d) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act (CYAA)*, the following is an individual investigative review regarding Florence. Her circumstances meet the criteria for a **systemic review**. Florence and her family were receiving Child Intervention through an Assessment at the time of her passing.

Investigative reviews are designed to improve the lives of young people by identifying ways to enhance services and supports, leading to system improvements and better outcomes for young people and their families. Releasing individual reviews ensures that each young person's circumstance is reported in a consistent manner and provides increased transparency and public accountability. I believe that this is in the public interest. I will review and report annually on themes identified across the investigative reviews and include recommendations.

The investigation process includes:

- Examination of critical issues
- Review of documentation and reports
- Review of policy and casework practice
- Personal interviews
- Other factors that may arise for consideration
- Notification and involvement of the young person's family, Band, Delegated First Nation Agency, community or cultural group, relevant Ministry, law enforcement agency, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Alberta Health Services, and any other person the Advocate considers appropriate.

In accordance with the *CYAA*, investigative reviews must be non-identifying. Therefore, the names used in these reports are pseudonyms (false names). Great care has been taken to protect their privacy; however, there is no guarantee that interested parties will be unable to identify them. Accordingly, readers and interested parties, including the media, should respect this privacy and not focus on identifying the individuals and locations involved in these matters.

Investigative reviews do not contain findings of legal responsibility or conclusions of law nor replace other processes that may occur, such as investigations or prosecutions under the *Criminal Code* of Canada. The intent of a review is not to find fault with specific individuals but to identify key issues and meaningful findings.

Florence's experiences were unique, and she left a lasting impression on those who knew and loved her. My heartfelt condolences go out to her family and those who cared about Florence.

Respectfully,

[Original signed by Terri Pelton]

Terri Pelton

Child and Youth Advocate (Alberta)

ABOUT FLORENCE AND HER FAMILY

Florence¹ was 16 years old when she passed away in the hospital from complications related to a brain tumour. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner did not investigate her death. Florence and her family were receiving Child Intervention through an **Assessment**² at the time of her passing.

Florence was a funny and friendly First Nation teenager. She was part of a large, blended family, and her parents, Edwin and Irene, separated when she was young. Edwin passed away a few years later. Florence and her siblings lived between their maternal grandmother, Gloria, and their mother's homes. Florence was approximately eight years old when Irene met Dillon, and they had two children.

SUMMARY OF FLORENCE'S EXPERIENCES WITH GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Florence from Birth to 10 Years Old

Florence was born healthy and discharged to her parents' care. At two months old, she was taken to the hospital, treated for respiratory sepsis, and discharged home with referral to a community doctor. During her childhood, she received routine medical care for illnesses and injuries.

Over the next 11 months, Child Intervention received 2 reports about emotional and physical injury related to family violence. Both times, Edwin was removed from the home. Irene was referred to community-based supports, and involvement ended. Edwin and Irene subsequently separated. It is unknown if he maintained regular contact with his children.

At four years old, Florence began an early education program, and concerns were noted with her speech and language. She was assessed, and an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) was implemented in Kindergarten. She had speech and language therapy and made significant progress, and in Grade 1, she transitioned to regular classroom programming. She was a happy student who consistently maintained above-average grades throughout elementary school.

When Florence was seven years old, Child Intervention received a report about physical injury related to Irene's substance use. The report was deemed to be malicious, and involvement ended.

Little is known about Florence's circumstances over the next three years. During this time, Edwin passed away. When Florence was 10 years old, she began having intense headaches. At the time, she was staying with Gloria, who took her to the hospital. Florence was diagnosed with a brain tumour that required immediate surgery. Her recovery was complicated, involving several surgeries and specialized treatment only available in another country. Hospital social workers organized travel and offered to help Irene apply for Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD), but she declined. Supports under Jordan's Principle were arranged so that Florence had continuity of care.

Florence's declining health impacted her school attendance, and she began to have academic difficulties. She had issues with her vision, speech, and walking, and was anxious at school. Florence was assessed, and an IPP was implemented that included a modified school day, reduced work, and an educational assistant (EA).

Florence from 11 to 16 Years Old

When Florence was 11 years old, Child Intervention received a report about emotional injury related to Irene and her partner, Dillon's, substance use and family violence. Irene said that she was overwhelmed caring for young children and managing Florence's high medical needs. She shared that she was in a methadone program, and a safety plan was developed that included her adult children, Katy and Rayna, calling the police if Irene and Dillon were involved in an altercation. Intervention involvement ended.

Florence's tumour returned, and she had several surgeries. Medical staff and educators worked together on planning to lessen the impact on her education. In Grade 7, Florence was reassessed, and her IPP was adjusted to meet her evolving needs.

Over the next two years, Florence had medical procedures and surgeries that impacted her attendance and grades. IPP supports were increased to provide two EAs and reduced schoolwork, and she was moved to a Knowledge and Employability program. She needed help with hygiene and feeding; and, as she lost the ability to walk and talk, she became fearful and anxious and did not want to go to school. Efforts to engage her in her education were unsuccessful.

Hospital social workers helped Irene apply for FSCD, which provided financial support. When she faced challenges, FSCD caseworkers tried to engage her in planning, so that supports would not end.

When Florence was 14 years old, Child Intervention received a report about Dillon's substance use and emotional injury related to family violence between him, Irene, and Katy. The police removed him from the home, and an Emergency Protection Order was

1. All names in the report are pseudonyms.
2. Bolded terms are defined in Appendix A.

obtained. The family agreed to a safety plan that allowed Dillon to return home to care for his two children and Florence, while Irene looked for a new residence. Intervention involvement ended.

Over the next year, Florence spent a significant amount of time in the hospital, and was supported to continue her education. She had multiple surgeries and treatments, but the tumour continued to grow. She lost her vision, and her quality of life declined. After her final surgery, Florence remained in the hospital. Health care staff arranged cultural supports and provided the family with meal vouchers, parking, and referrals to housing supports.

When Florence was 16 years old, Child Intervention received a report about emotional injury related to Irene's substance use and ability to care for her children. She had housing instability and said that she was overwhelmed and had relapsed. Hospital staff helped her arrange an inpatient detoxification program and then addiction treatment, which she completed. Attempts by caseworkers to engage Irene in planning were unsuccessful.

Florence's health rapidly declined, and medical staff advised Irene of her condition. After consulting with medical staff, Irene consented to removing Florence from life support. The family was supported to complete ceremonies specific to their Indigenous culture. Sixteen-year-old Florence passed away surrounded by her family at her bedside. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner did not investigate her death. Hospital staff helped with arrangements to have her body returned to her First Nation for burial. Florence is deeply missed by those who knew and loved her.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Birth to 10 Years Old	11 to 16 Years Old
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 Months Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Diagnosed with sepsis<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Treated and discharged home• 11 – 13 Months Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Child Intervention involved 2 times• 4 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Assessed<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Individualized Program Plan (IPP)• 7 – 9 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Child Intervention involvement· Father passed away• 10 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Diagnosed with a brain tumour<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Surgeries· Jordan’s Principle supports· Assessment<ul style="list-style-type: none">· IPP· Education assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11 – 13 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Child Intervention involvement· Surgeries· IPP supports increased· Family Support for Children with Disabilities• 14 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Child Intervention involvement<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Emergency Protection Order· Surgeries• 16 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Surgeries· Child Intervention involvement <p>16-year-old Florence passed away</p>

FINDINGS

Children and Family Services

Child Intervention was involved with Florence and her family six times because of emotional and physical injury related to her mother's substance use and family violence. The reports were either deemed to be malicious, or the family was appropriately connected to community-based supports. Adequate safety plans were developed before involvements ended.

Health

Florence received routine medical care for illnesses and injuries in her first nine years. When she was 10 years old, Florence was diagnosed with a brain tumour. She received timely and coordinated health services that included specialized treatment offered only in another country. Jordan's Principle supports were arranged for continuity of care, and her family received additional financial support to remove barriers to visiting her when she was hospitalized. Medical staff collaborated with educators on planning to lessen the impact on Florence's education and provided comprehensive support and advocacy for Florence and her family. The Ministry of Hospital and Surgical Health Services has been notified of this exemplary practice.

Education

After Florence began early education programming, she received speech and language supports through an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) that met her needs. She was an above-average student in elementary school. As her medical needs evolved, school staff adapted services to match her level of functioning. She had timely assessments and appropriate accommodations through IPPs. Educators collaborated with medical professionals to minimize disruptions to her education. As Florence's functioning lessened, it became increasingly difficult to engage her in her education.

Assisted Living and Social Services

Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) caseworkers were responsive to Florence's needs and provided appropriate support to the family. They continued to make efforts to increase Irene's engagement in planning when she faced challenges, so that services would not end.

THEMES TO TRACK

1. Medical services

Health professionals provided holistic supports to Florence and her family that were culturally informed to meet her physical, emotional, and medical needs.

2. Collaboration and information sharing

Health professionals and educators shared information and collaborated on planning so that Florence's holistic needs were met. FSCD caseworkers consistently tried to engage Irene so that Florence would not have disruptions in services.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Assessment

The gathering and analysis of information to determine whether a child is in need of intervention under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

Systemic Review

Under the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the Advocate may conduct a public review when a young person is seriously injured or dies while (or within two years of) receiving designated services (*Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* intakes, assessments, post-18 supports, was in open or closed custody under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and/or involvement under the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*) to determine if systemic issues are present.

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