

14-YEAR-OLD BRODY

Serious Injury

AN INVESTIGATIVE REVIEW

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, Alberta

April 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 Brody. His circumstances meet the criteria for a **systemic review**. Brody was receiving Child Intervention through a Permanent Guardianship Order at the time of his serious injury.

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.

Brody's experiences were unique, and his injury has left a lasting impact on him and his family's lives. My thoughts are with Brody, his family, and those who care about Brody.

Respectfully,

[Original signed by Terri Pelton]

Terri Pelton

Child and Youth Advocate (Alberta)

ABOUT BRODY AND HIS FAMILY

Brody¹ was 14 years old when he was the victim of violence and was seriously injured. He was transported to hospital by air ambulance and had surgery. Brody was receiving Child Intervention through a **Permanent Guardianship Order (PGO)**² at the time of his injury.

Brody is a bright and quiet First Nation youth who enjoys video games, racing horses, and playing hockey and basketball. He is from a large, blended family. His parents, Ella and Jace, used substances, and at times, their relationship was violent. Ella passed away unexpectedly when Brody was seven years old, after which he lived with extended family members.

SUMMARY OF BRODY'S EXPERIENCES WITH GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Brody from Birth to 10 Years Old

Brody was born healthy and discharged to Ella and Jace's care. Over the next two years, he received routine medical care for common childhood illnesses.

When Brody was two years old, Child Intervention received a report about emotional injury related to his parents' substance use and family violence. The police responded, and a No-Contact Order between his parents was put in place. During the Assessment additional reports were received about ongoing substance use and family violence. The Assessment remained open for approximately one year with no follow up documented nor how concerns were resolved before Intervention involvement ended.

Brody started school at five years old in his First Nation. He received speech-language therapy, and by the end of the school year, no longer needed support. Teachers described him as polite and hard-working, though his school attendance was inconsistent.

Brody was taken to the hospital four times for minor injuries. Each time, he was assessed, treated, and discharged home. Little is known about the health services Brody received in his First Nation over the next several years.

When Brody was six years old, his family began living with Jace's mother, Tessa. Child Intervention received a report about emotional injury related to family violence and Tessa selling substances. Involvement ended after Jace, Ella and their children were connected to community-based supports and moved into their own home.

Ella passed away unexpectedly when Brody was seven years old. Following her death, Jace's substance use increased, and the family moved back in with Tessa. Shortly after, Child Intervention received a report about neglect related to inadequate food, clothing and supervision. Jace entered into an **Enhancement Agreement** and met with caseworkers and relatives to develop a plan that included in-home support, addiction programming and counselling for the children.

Over the following two months, additional concerns were received about Jace's substance use and that Tessa had health issues that prevented her from providing care. The children were **apprehended**. Brody's two younger siblings were placed with relatives, while he and his brother, Ty, were placed with their aunt and uncle, Mira and Adam. Caseworkers completed the initial safety checks but did not complete a full kinship care assessment nor a support plan.

Brody's school attendance and academic achievement improved. He visited with Jace, Tessa and his siblings regularly, and received counselling for grief and loss. Jace continued to struggle with substance use, and when Brody was eight years old, he and his siblings became subjects of a **Temporary Guardianship Order**.

Several months later, Brody and Ty were moved back to Tessa's home, while their siblings remained with relatives. Caseworkers arranged for in-home supports, a youth worker and provided the family with clothing and furniture.

During this time, Jace and Tessa completed parenting assessments that found they were unable to safely care for the children because of their substance use. Brody told caseworkers that he did not feel safe, and soon after, he was returned to Mira and Adam's home. Nine-year-old Brody and his brother became the subjects of a PGO. He had visits with his siblings and met with a youth worker. He continued to succeed in school and was described as a focused, dedicated, respectful student.

When Brody was 10 years old, he and Ty were moved outside of their First Nation to live with relatives. The reason they were moved was not documented. While there, Brody worked with a counsellor and a mentor, and remained connected to his family and culture.

Brody from 11 to 14 Years Old

The following year, caseworkers received concerns that Brody and Ty were not supported in their kinship home to attend school. The PGO remained in place, and they were returned to Jace's care, who was working on his sobriety. A youth worker and in-home supports were provided. Several months later, concerns were received about neglect related to hygiene and the condition of the home. The family received assistance to temporarily move to a hotel.

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

There was conflict between Brody's family and community members, and, in Grade 7, he asked to go to a different school, but there were waitlists. His attendance declined, and school staff visited him at home and encouraged him to return to school. Brody was afraid because he had been physically assaulted there. A healing circle was arranged that included Brody, his peers, school staff, Elders and the police. Brody indicated that he felt safe returning to school, but his attendance remained poor.

Caseworkers continued to receive reports about Jace's substance use and inadequate supervision. Brody and Ty were moved to their maternal grandmother, Abigail's, home. A kinship support plan was completed, but an assessment was not done. While there, Brody cared for and raced horses and was an avid athlete who excelled in basketball.

In Grade 8, Brody received speech and language services at a local health center for a speech disorder. Towards the end of the school year, he was suspended following verbal outbursts towards peers. The police investigated, and charges were not laid. A Violence Threat Risk Assessment was completed to determine the conditions under which Brody could return to school. Recommendations included counselling and a psychological assessment, which were implemented. The assessment identified that he had a learning disability and would benefit from extra time on assignments, tutoring, and clear expectations; however, there were delays in arranging his return to school.

Abigail's health declined, and she was hospitalized. Brody and Ty were moved to their grandfather, Wyatt's, home. Ty's mental health began to decline, and he had physical and emotional outbursts that Wyatt found challenging to manage. A kinship assessment to determine Wyatt's capacity and required supports was not completed. Caseworkers provided resources for housing, transportation and food, and coordinated services to stabilize Ty's behaviours.

Five months after his 14th birthday, Brody was the victim of violence and was seriously injured. He was taken to the hospital by air ambulance and had surgery. The police investigated, and charges were laid. Brody has fully recovered and continues to receive child intervention services through a PGO.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Birth to 10 Years Old	11 to 14 Years Old
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Birth – 2 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Born healthy· Child Intervention involvement• 5 – 6 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Started school<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Speech-language therapy· Poor attendance· Child Intervention involvement• 7 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Mother passed away· Lived with grandmother· Child Intervention involvement<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Enhancement Agreement· Apprehended<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Kinship care· Placed with brother• 8 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Temporary Guardianship Order· Kinship care• 9 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Permanent Guardianship Order• 10 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Kinship care· Counselling and youth work supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· School attendance declined· Returned to father’s care· Physically assaulted at school• 12 – 13 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Kinship care· Speech-language supports· Violence Threat Risk Assessment<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Counselling· Psychological assessment• 14 Years Old<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Kinship care <p>14-year-old Brody was seriously injured</p>

FINDINGS

Children and Family Services

Child Intervention first became involved with Brody when he was two years old due to emotional injury related to his parents' substance use and family violence. The Assessment remained open for a significant period with no follow up documented, nor how concerns were resolved before involvement ended. The Assessment was not completed within the timeframes identified in the Enhancement Policy Manual (EPM).

Brody's mother passed away when he was seven years old. He and his siblings lived with Jace and Tessa and were apprehended within months. They subsequently became the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order. Brody had several kinship placements with relatives. The EPM outlines requirements to assess and support kinship caregivers, which were inconsistently applied. In addition, the rationale for Brody's placement moves was not documented as per EPM requirements.

The Ministry of Children and Family Services has been notified that an internal review may be beneficial in Brody's circumstances to determine if further system improvements are required to strengthen policy and practice standards related to policy requirements for the assessment and support of kinship placements and file standards for documentation.

Brody was mostly placed with relatives in his First Nation, which enhanced his family, cultural and community connections. He was also supported to maintain contact with his siblings, his father and extended family members and regularly took part in cultural and recreational activities, which promoted his sense of belonging.

Health

Little is known about the health services Brody received in his First Nation. He was born healthy, and during his first two years, he received routine medical care for minor illnesses and injuries.

When Brody was 13 years old, he received appropriate support for a speech disorder at a local health center.

Education

Brody attended elementary school in his First Nation and received therapy for a speech and language delay. During times when his circumstances were stable, he was engaged in school and did well.

Placement changes disrupted Brody's education. By junior high school, his attendance was sporadic, and efforts by educators to engage him were unsuccessful. When he voiced feeling unsafe at school, school staff promptly arranged a healing circle. Despite indications that the situation subsequently improved, Brody's attendance remained poor.

In Grade 8, Brody was suspended from school because of emotional outbursts. A Violence Threat Risk Assessment was completed, and recommendations were implemented; however, his return to school was delayed.

THEMES TO TRACK

1. Implementation and consistency of policy and practice expectations

The policy and practice standards outlined in the Enhancement Policy Manual related to Assessment, supporting kinship caregivers and documentation were not met.

2. Family and cultural connection

Brody benefited from case planning and placements that fostered his connections to his family, community and culture.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Apprehended

The court grants the “Director” as defined in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act (CYFEA)* temporary custody of the child on reasonable and probable grounds that the child needs intervention in accordance with *CYFEA*.

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*.

Enhancement Agreement (EA)

A voluntary agreement under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* to provide services and support to a family or a young person who is 16 or 17 years old. It is intended to address protection concerns while the child remains with a guardian or lives independently.

Permanent Guardianship Order (PGO)

Under this order, the “Director” as defined in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* becomes the sole guardian of a child. The order is sought when it is believed that the child cannot be safely returned to their guardian within a specified time frame.

Supervision Order (SO)

A court order granting the “Director” as defined in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* mandatory supervision of a young person. Guardians retain custody.

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.

Temporary Guardianship Order (TGO)

The court grants the “Director” as defined in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* custody and guardianship of a child for a specific period. The child is in the care of Child Intervention Services, and guardianship is shared with the parent/ legal guardian.

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