



6-YEAR-OLD OCTAVIA

AN INVESTIGATIVE REVIEW

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, Alberta
October 2026

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under my authority and duty as identified in Section 9.1 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act (CYAA)*, the following is an individual investigative review regarding Octavia. Her circumstances meet the criteria for a **mandatory review**. Octavia and her family were receiving Child Intervention through a Temporary Guardianship Order 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.

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.

Octavia'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 Octavia.

Respectfully,

[Original signed by Terri Pelton]

Terri Pelton

Child and Youth Advocate (Alberta)

ABOUT OCTAVIA AND HER FAMILY

Octavia¹ was six years old when she passed away in the hospital from complications related to a severe asthma attack. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is not investigating. Octavia and her family were receiving Child Intervention through a **Temporary Guardianship Order (TGO)**² at the time of her passing.

Octavia was a sweet and strong-willed, First Nation child with an adventurous spirit. She enjoyed drawing, colouring, and riding her bike.

Octavia was part of a large, blended family. She was Reid and Scarlett's only child together and had close relationships with her siblings and extended family members. Reid passed away from medical complications when Octavia was four years old. At times, Scarlett used substances and had relationships that were volatile.

SUMMARY OF OCTAVIA'S EXPERIENCES WITH GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Octavia from Birth to 6 Years Old

Scarlett received regular prenatal care. Octavia was born without the lower part of her left arm but was otherwise healthy. Before being discharged home, she was referred to a specialized clinic and received follow up care.

When Octavia was a year old, she was taken to the hospital and treated for an ear and respiratory infection. Doctors indicated that she likely had asthma and she was given medication and an inhaler before being discharged home. For the remainder of her childhood, Octavia was followed by her family doctor who monitored her asthma.

Over the next year, Octavia had ear surgery to help prevent further infections. Doctors noted she had difficulty gaining weight and her parents were referred to a community public health program. They met with a dietitian and learned strategies to help improve her eating; her weight increased. Octavia's parents and her doctor observed that she had difficulty communicating with others. She was assessed and diagnosed with a language delay.

At three years old, Octavia started an early childhood education program, where she remained for three years. She received speech and language support, was reassessed annually and her speech and language improved over time.

The following year, Octavia's parents separated and Scarlett entered into a new relationship. Soon after, Reid passed away because of medical complications. Octavia

began having emotional outbursts and was supported by her family to process the loss of her father. She started Kindergarten and had a behavioural support plan, which included transition support and strategies to help manage her emotions.

When Octavia was five years old, Child Intervention received a report about neglect and emotional injury related to her mother's substance use, family violence and inappropriate caregivers. A safety plan was developed with Scarlett that included her children having sober caregivers and not having verbal and physical altercations with others in front of them. Intervention involvement ended after referrals were made to community-based prevention services.

A few months later, Child Intervention received a report about similar concerns. Octavia was **apprehended** and placed in kinship care with a relative, Carmen, who had a health condition that worsened with increased stress. A plan was developed to help reduce her stress that included self-care activities, frequent check-ins, extra respite care, housekeeping, and daycare.

Octavia became the subject of a TGO. Scarlett worked with a mental health therapist and an addiction counsellor along with accessing community-based supports. She had supervised visits with Octavia that transitioned to short unsupervised visits.

Caseworkers worked with Octavia's First Nation to explore family connections for her. Carmen supported regular contact with her siblings and other relatives, and they often visited Octavia's Nation. She continued to see her family doctor and an asthma action plan was developed that included her triggers, signs of an attack and how to respond.

At six years old, Octavia started Grade 1. Soon after, caseworkers received concerns about inadequate supervision related to Scarlett having an unapproved and unsupervised overnight visit with Octavia. A safety plan was developed that included ensuring visits were approved and increased respite care was provided to Carmen.

Approximately two weeks later, Octavia had difficulty breathing and her inhaler was administered, but her condition did not improve. Emergency medical services responded and she was transported to the hospital where she was intubated and placed in an intensive care unit. Despite medical interventions, her condition worsened and six-year-old Octavia passed away. Doctors determined that she died from complications related to a severe asthma attack. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is not investigating. A funeral was held in her honour, and Octavia is deeply missed by those who knew and loved her.

1. All names in the report are pseudonyms.

2. Bolded terms are defined in Appendix A.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Birth to 6 Years Old

• Birth – 1 Year Old

- Born without lower part of left arm
 - Specialized clinic
- Hospital visit for infections
 - Asthma queried
- Family doctor
 - Prescribed asthma medication and monitored condition

• 2 Years Old

- Ear surgery
- Dietitian
- Assessed
 - Diagnosed with language delay

• 3 Years Old

- Early childhood education program
 - Ongoing speech and language support

• 4 Years Old

- Father passed away from medical complications
 - Emotional outbursts
- Kindergarten
 - Behavioural support plan

• 5 Years Old

- Child Intervention involved 2 times
 - Apprehended
 - Kinship care
 - Temporary Guardianship Order

• 6 Years Old

- Grade 1
- Hospitalized for severe asthma attack

6-year-old Octavia passed away

FINDINGS

Children and Family Services

Child Intervention was involved with Octavia and her family twice when she was five years old. She was apprehended and placed in kinship care. There were ongoing efforts to support her family and cultural connections, which were primarily arranged through her caregiver. Caseworkers' appropriately safety planned when concerns were identified, facilitated medical care for Octavia and supported her caregiver to meet her needs. Octavia benefited from ongoing and purposeful planning that prioritized meaningful connections and considered her overall well-being.

Health

Octavia was born without the lower part of her left arm and received follow up care from a specialized clinic. She regularly saw a family doctor who monitored her health, provided treatment and referred her for services as needed. Through her ongoing medical care, Octavia's asthma and difficulties with speech and language were identified early and she received timely assessments and the support she required.

Education

At three years old, Octavia started an early childhood education program because concerns were noted about her development. Over the next three years she received effective support to help improve her speech, language and self regulation.

THEMES TO TRACK

1. Case planning

Octavia's connection to her family and culture, and overall well-being were prioritized in Child Intervention case planning.

2. Assessment

Octavia had timely assessments through Health that identified her needs and the support she required.

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.

Mandatory Review

Under the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the Advocate must conduct a Mandatory Review when a young person dies who had an agreement or order under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* at the time of their death. A public report must be released within one year of being notified of the young person’s death.

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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