



FOR YOUTH IN CARE YAC NEWS

Brought to you by the voices of the Youth Advisory Committee for the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society

Spring 2022 highlights:

- A story from Elder April Bennett, Cultural Coordinator
- YAC IN ACTION!
 - National Council for Youth in Care Advocates
 - MCFD Complaint Circle
 - McCreary Centre Society
 - Inclusive Foster Caregiver Information Sessions
 - Teaching social work students at Douglas College
- Regalia Making!
- Community Resources

What is YAC?

The Youth Advisory Committee is a group of 12 youth in or from VACFSS' care that was formed back in 2010. Over the past 12 years, our goal has been to ensure that youth not only have a voice in their own care, but also in the larger care system that is designed to support them. We also ensure that VACFSS holds a youth voice, and its policies and initiatives are informed by young people who have experienced care. We strive to have every young Indigenous leader journey successfully from care into community. YAC is also committed to improving social work practice, and to continually developing their leadership and advocacy skills.

YAC Vision & Mission

VISION STATEMENT:

Every young Indigenous leader journeys successfully from care into community.

MISSION STATEMENT:

YAC ensures that youth have a voice in their own care and that the whole care system that is designed to represent them.

A story from Elder April Bennett, Cultural Coordinator

Kindness, what a word, we need kindness to help us do the changes we need to do. Otherwise if we were told to do this in a commanding voice how would we react? Probably we would just think about it. In kindness, we can involve everyone, no one is lacking because everyone feels unsure about the future.

All of our ancestors went through so much over the generations; flus, small pox, other communicable diseases, residential schools, sixty scoop, racism, addictions. At times in this pandemic, I can hear kindness, sharing, doing for others. There's also uncertainty as we keep moving forward. There are so many changes going on and how do we fit everything in and what changes will happen and how will that effect our well being? I do believe that this is what the world needed, to slow things down, to cut pollution down for ourselves and Mother Earth, the noise level can go down also. It is starting up again and people seem in a hurry to get somewhere and sometimes our coping abilities are showing. We are not coping well with rules of keeping ourselves safe as well as others.

As for now Mother Earth can resume her giving, teachings, support to all, the animals maybe we won't hunt for sport anymore and we can look at all as having the right to be here. It may be like:

I love animals
For they make you wish
You could be something wild, wary, unseen; others loveable.

I love water
For it is something
That holds many things.

I love trees
For it shelters the meek,
Uncertain, whispering its comfort.

I love the wind,
For it brings new tidings and
Calls on life.

I love life
For it gives all that it has.

I love myself
For I am all of these things.

Just know we are continuing altogether. We are also wonderful!!! I feel blessed to have you in my life, thank you for being you.

- April Bennett



YAC IN ACTION!

Spring has sprung and YAC hit the ground running in 2022! From our involvement with the National Council for Youth in Care Advocates, the MCFD Children and Youth Complaints Circle, a joint partnership with McCreary Centre Society for a youth study, the inclusive foster caregiver recruitment process, to regalia-making, we're excited to share what we've been up to!

We hope the information we share in this newsletter reaches our fellow youth in care, and that we continue to represent our collective voices in the work that we do. It is recognition that our lived-in experiences of the care system can better inform practice, policy, and social change.

National Council for Youth in Care Advocates ~ written by Teka

Throughout the last two years during the pandemic, VACFSS Youth Advisory Committee has been invited by Ottawa to come together and form the National Council for Youth in Care Advocates. That means for the last two years, we have had meetings together with fellow advocates from all over Turtle Island to familiarize ourselves with best practice and review current legislation in order to develop equitable standards for youth and children in care.

What does that mean to you? It means that we are breaking glass ceilings and creating new legislation to improve the experience of children and youth in care so that youth in care have the same opportunity and support as non-care involved peers have.

We will be sending YAC representatives to Ottawa this coming October to finalize the new document and engage at the press event. We want to hear from you about what you need.



WHAT CHANGES
WOULD MAKE FOR
A HAPPIER
TOMORROW?



**PEOPLE WITH PURPOSE,
GOALS AND VISIONS HAVE
NO TIME FOR DRAMA. THEY
INVEST THEIR ENERGY IN
CREATIVITY AND FOCUS ON
LIVING A POSITIVE LIFE.**

**- UNKNOWN
(FROM ELDER ORENE JOHNSTON'S
"THOUGHT FOR THE DAY" QUOTES)**

MCFD Children and Youth Complaints Circle ~written by Cheyenne

After YAC helped develop the VACFSS complaints process (Client Concerns Resolution Process - CCRP), I am excited for the opportunity to be involved in the Children and Youth Complaints Circle which is focused on the complaints process within MCFD, and how it can be improved. We have been focused on awareness, accessibility, advocacy, fairness and feeling safe. So far coming together as a circle, including an Elder, has been a great way to discuss our thoughts and work together on improving things. My voice feels heard and valued and I'm learning a lot.

VACFSS x McCreary Centre Society Joint Partnership Youth Study Group ~ written by Amber

For the past two years I have been working with the McCreary Centre to help them develop a study group for Indigenous youth with care experience.

The study group will be in person, consist of 6-12 youth per study group and aims to find what is helpful to reduce risky substance use with youth. This can be a difficult subject to talk about, so an elder will be present and available. At any point, participants may leave the room if they need, until they are ready to rejoin. There will be ice breaker activities, opportunities to discuss questions in smaller groups, bags with objects to fidget with, as well as paper and pencils to doodle. There will also be food provided and honoraria for your time.

This study group will also provide a space for youth to share any resources or supports in the community, as well as giving the opportunity to voice what needs to be improved to better support the health and well-being of youth. Currently, we are still trying to figure out dates for the study group, as well as paying attention to recommendations on how to gather with the pandemic. It will be hosted at the VACFSS guardianship office at 3284 East Broadway in Vancouver, in the early evening.

If you are interested in participating please contact Jessica Knutson, Child & Youth Engagement
jessica_knutson@vacfss.com | 604-216-6136



LIFE IS LIKE A CAMERA

**FOCUS ON WHAT'S
IMPORTANT
CAPTURE THE
GOOD TIMES,
DEVELOP FROM THE
NEGATIVES**

**AND IF THINGS DON'T
WORK OUT TAKE
ANOTHER SHOT**

**- UNKNOWN
(FROM ELDER ORENE JOHNSTON'S
"THOUGHT FOR THE DAY" QUOTES)**



Inclusive Foster Caregiver Information Sessions

~ written by Nehemias (YAC) and the VACFSS Resources Team



I have had the opportunity to present at a handful of foster caregiver information sessions alongside other fellow members of YAC. What I appreciate about the sessions is that Kamisha and Carmen (from the Resources Department) are, in a way, taking future foster caregivers down a path: showing them what to expect, the possible obstacles, and how to eventually get to the end of the path (becoming a foster caregiver).

I believe that YAC's involvement is particularly impactful when we share about our work on the committee. My favourite part of our presentation is when the possible future foster caregivers get an opportunity to ask us any questions about our lived experience, and to get an idea of what they should expect. I enjoy answering their questions because hearing first hand experience from someone who has been through it all, has more of an impact than reading information off of a piece of paper.

The feedback we have received is that YAC's voices in the sessions have a great impact on decisions of whether a person would foster or not, which is all the more reason why I enjoy participating in these sessions and look forward to presenting more in the future.

- Nehemias

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) at Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS), are guest presenters at the monthly Inclusive Foster Caregiver Information sessions.

At this information session YAC presents to those in attendance who are considering foster caregiving. YAC's participation is highly valued by those attending the inclusive foster caregiver information session. YAC speaks from firsthand experience of the positive support caregivers have had on them while also providing context to the importance of connecting children & youth to their Indigenous culture.

This sharing with participants is profound, bringing a voice that attendees feel accountable to. Additionally, imparting an important message about how big a role caregivers play in the lives of the children and youth in and out of care. Their message invites attendees to reflect and give serious thought to caregiving and whether it is a fit for them.

Resources strives to recruit caregivers who can provide the stable, loving, and supportive home children and youth need and that means being accountable to their unique needs.

The importance of connecting to traditional Indigenous values of knowledge is covered at this information session, as well. Youth as such are presented as knowledge keepers that deserve respect and have an important voice in the process of recruitment. Currently, the Youth Advisory Committee is reviewing and revising their presentation wanting to provide a more interactive experience with their audience. Resources speaks to the process of becoming an inclusive foster caregiver with VACFSS; the youth advisory committee speaks to their experience, that no one else can.

It is with much gratitude from Recruitment, that the Youth Advisory Committee presents and shares their knowledge at the Inclusive Foster Caregiver Information sessions.

- Resources Team

YAC Teaching at Douglas College Bachelor of Social Work Students

You may recall in our first issue of the YAC newsletter that we were given the opportunity to stand in front of social work students at Douglas College to speak from our lived-in experience of the care system. We were so happy to be invited back again to speak, and even more so this time as it was with Holly Anderson, the VACFSS Guardianship Manager's third-year Indigenous Child Welfare course. We believe that positive shifts in social work practice come from upholding the voices of youth with care experience. Sharing our teachings and engaging in discussions created important conversations about what youth need and expect from their social workers who are accountable to supporting their journeys in care and aging out into the community.



Regalia Making!

As one of the recipients of the Giving Voice Grant, YAC is grateful for The Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW) whose funding made it possible for us to make regalia with the support of Knowledge Keeper Dancing Water Sandy and Elder April Bennett.



Regalia project group with Bernadette Spence, CEO of VACFSS

Creating Regalia is a reflective, holistic process that takes each of us on a personal journey through our history, our ancestry, and in some cases into a world of embracing adopted cultural teachings. In some cases, our own ways of being and knowing are displaced. The word "regalia" means traditional items or clothing that higher status folks wear on official or special occasions. For us this is not always the case, these highly ornate beaded and sewn reflect our everyday clothing and items. Although, some creations such as clothing used in dances or ceremonies are reserved for just such an occasion. Items including moccasins, ribbon skirts, jewelry become everyday pieces of our wardrobe and outward symbols of our identity as Indigenous peoples. Wearing these items can create room for conversations/awareness, reclaiming space and identity, but best of all they reflect the pride we have in ourselves. To have an opportunity to begin exploring what these items might be and what they will look like with the YAC has been a privilege and a beautiful journey. I am grateful for the opportunity to come together and begin to explore our identities and traditional clothing items infused with contemporary materials and practices. I look forward to continuing this journey and being a part of a unique and special group. Thank you for your acceptance and courage to take this journey together.

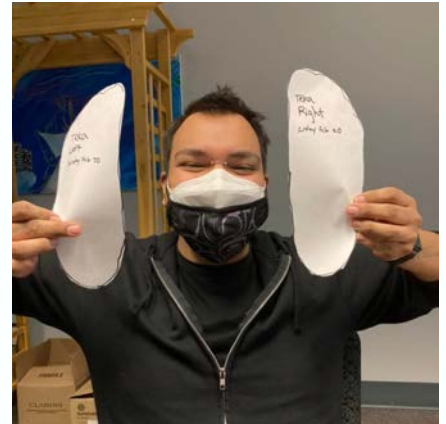
~ Dancing Water

Regalia Making! ~ written by Dori



We are in the process of making regalia garments for participation of our cultural gathering, we are hopeful that we can take our regalia to other countries to participate in their cultural events. We've gathered once a week to be with one another and elders who have knowledge for making these garments. This has pulled the VACFSS YAC closer together. We are creating our own ribbon skirts, ribbon shirts, ribbon vests, medicine pouches, and moccasins with our love.

We have really enjoyed working with Dancing Water who came all the way from Williams Lake to teach us how to put our ribbons on.



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Teachings from Elder April Bennett

It has been so nice to spend time with all of you. This was a time where we put aside some time for ourselves to listen, learn, help, mindfulness and create. Although it may take time to finish or complete a skirt, medicine bag, moccasins, vest and dress, it's all good. It is for you to have. Doesn't matter how or how many mistakes there are, it's for you. To know all completed their skirts and some of the moccasins are cut out brings joy to my heart. I got to visit, witness, try my hand at beading etc., something I used to do a longtime ago. I have made a ribbon skirt and one for my daughter Carlina. I understand how it can be especially with our sewing machines. I was so happy when Dancing Water put together and sorted out the sewing boxes, just to see what we do have. I was wishing I had time with Erika or someone to do this before the workshops as it's important to begin well.



I understand how it can be especially with our sewing machines. I was so happy when Dancing Water put together and sorted out the sewing boxes, just to see what we do have. I was wishing I had time with Erika or someone to do this before the workshops as it's important to begin well.

I wish to thank everyone for their understanding, patience as they begin their work on the regalia. I thought 'wow how awesome is this workshop' as it's you who make it that way. At times during the sewing club, I tell people to take their time and put things down when they get frustrated so that energy won't go into the sewing project onto you and the babies we are sewing for. We only want them to feel love. It is easy to let something upsetting dictate your mood or attitude for the rest of the day. When this happens, get into the habit of beginning your day again and make a conscious decision to return to a place of calm. Even if it is last thing at night say out loud "I am starting my day again," and reclaim yourself. Sometimes a big breath in and letting all that bothers you out helps. We are not made to be perfect; no one is except for Creator.

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When the blanket is completed I can see how proud people are and will continue to sew. I can hardly wait to see all of you with your regalia. Who knows maybe there will be something else we can do together. I know two are interested in cedar harvesting.

All that you made is good for ceremony. When we gather, we get to see all the lovely skirts that are there. This can be for Indigenous Day, sweats, Yuwipi ceremony, Sundance, burning, Sage Picking, Honoring and Naming Ceremonies, Our Sacred Bundle Ceremony (which all of you are) which is like a ritual with spiritual significance held with prayers and prayer songs as in openings and big drum songs. All drum songs. You are a part of the journey of holding ritual, traditionally a part of culture that is passed down from person to person; generation to generation. You are a beginning and your ancestors are happy.



Know Your Rights!

VACFSS CLIENT CONCERNS RESOLUTION PROCESS (CCRP)



DO YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT?
THERE'S A WAY TO HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD!
604.875.7000 OR COMPLAINTS@VACFSS.COM

VACFSS is committed to delivering services that are grounded in our core values of belonging, respect, humility, integrity and strength based practice. If you are not satisfied with our services, you may be eligible to make a complaint by contacting the Quality Assurance Advisor. The purpose of the Client Concern Resolution Process (CCRP) is to empower families to voice their concerns and come together collaboratively to find resolution that focuses on rebuilding relationships.

Some reasons you may want to make a complaint if:

- You are unsure why a certain decision was made
- You feel you were treated unfairly
- You were denied VACFSS services
- Your rights as a child in care were not respected

Who can make a complaint?

- People who are receiving services from VACFSS
- People who feel they should be receiving services from VACFSS

THE PROCESS →

1. Contact the Quality Assurance Advisor (QAA). The QAA will:
 - Explain the process with the aim of rebuilding relationship
 - Record your complaint for tracking purposes
 - Inform the involved parties about your concern
2. Attempt Local Resolution through initial circle
 - Meet with the social worker and their supervisor to go over your concerns with the help of the QAA if needed
3. Request Final Review through expanded circle
 - If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Local Resolution, then request a Final Review through the QAA
 - The Program Manager will conduct the Final Review
4. Request External Review
 - For an external Administrative Review conducted by the Ministry of Children and Family Services, contact the QAA

Resources at your Fingertips!

Project Treehouse YVR on Instagram @projecttreehouseyvr

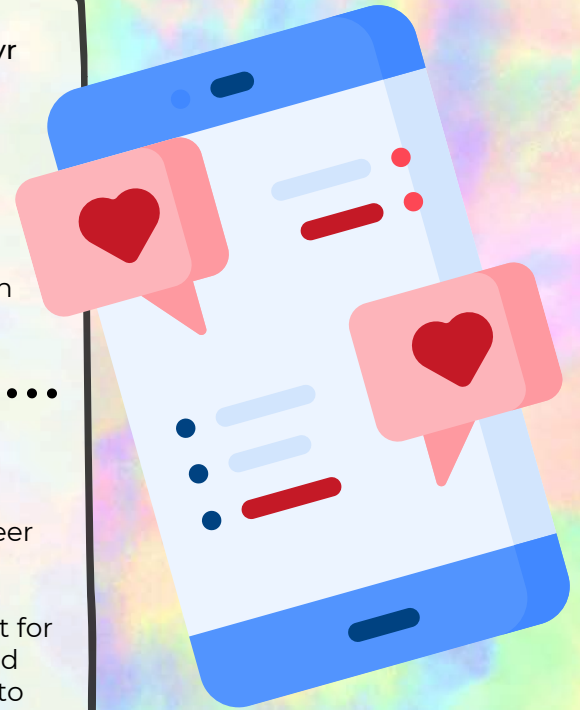
Launched by 21-year-old Raisa Jose, @projecttreehouseyvr on Instagram spreads awareness of organizations, websites, services supporting youth in British Columbia.

Why is it called Project Treehouse YVR? Raisa wanted this project to act as a respite or a safe space for youth; a place where they can go when they are seeking comfort.

Kids Help Phone for Indigenous Youth Message FIRST NATIONS, INUIT or METIS to 686868

Now, Indigenous people can connect with an Indigenous volunteer crisis responder.

Kids Help Phone is a safe space for Indigenous youth to reach out for caring, confidential, non-judgmental support. Our counsellors and Crisis Responders receive ongoing, Indigenous-sourced training to help them understand the unique realities lived by many Indigenous youth.



Youthspace Text: 778-783-0177 | www.youthspace.ca

What: Online crisis and emotional support via live chat and text. Go to their website or text the number.

When: Everyday, 6pm-Midnight PST.

Who: Anyone in Canada under 30 years is welcome.

YouthInBC Chat <https://youthinbc.com/>

What: On-line crisis chat service. Go to their website to access non-judgemental, confidential support.

When: Everyday, 12:00pm until 1:00am.

Who: 25 years old and under, however, they won't turn someone away based on their age. In BC and Yukon only.

Mindshift App <https://www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/>

What: Learn to relax and take charge of your anxiety

Cost: Free

Calm Harm <https://calmharm.co.uk/#row1>

What: Comfort, Distract, Express Yourself, Release, Random and Breathe. When you ride the wave, the urge to self-harm will fade.

Cost: Free

More Resources at your Fingertips!

Trans Care BC
Toll-Free: 1-866-999-1514 | <http://www.phsa.ca/transcare>

What: Gender-affirming care, information and resources. They can be contacted by phone and email, and have drop-in groups.

When: Phones are open 8:30am-4:30pm Monday-Friday

Who: Open to all, gender diverse and trans people, parents and guardians, support people and friends.

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QMunity
www.qmunity.ca | youth@qmunity.ca

What: Queer resource centre that offers various resources, group drop-in spaces, one-on-one support, and more.

When: Monday to Friday, 10 am to 6 pm

Who: Ages 25 and under for the youth services



Community Resources

PCRS - Pathways to Education
604.709.5744 | pathwaysvancouver@pcrs.ca | www.pcrs.ca/our-services/pathways/

Tutoring, mentoring, financial, and one-to-one support for youth grades 8-12 operating out of RayCam Community Centre, Strathcona Community Centre, and Britannia Secondary School.

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PATH Youth Employment Program
Burnaby Neighbourhood House | 604-431-0400

Works with youth aged 16-30 years old who are looking for full time work. Includes 3 weeks of paid training, 10 weeks of full-time paid work placements, and programing is offered both online and in-person. The program combines life skills and employability skills with certification in numerous areas.

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TeenWork
Offered in the Lower Mainland, Based at University of Victoria | teenworkmanager@uvic.ca

TeenWork s designed to help youth 15-19 years old with disabilities and mental health challenges find and retain meaningful, part-time paid employment while attending high school. TeenWork was developed with the aim of filling a gap in the employment field for youth with disabilities as they near the transition to adulthood.

GLOSSARY OF SOCIAL WORK JARGON

ADVOCATE: Advocate: people who work at making things fair for folks with needs.

ASSESSMENT: A questionnaire, test, or exam used to gather information (example: a mental health assessment collects information on how someone handles stressful situations).

AGE-OUT/AGING OUT OF CARE: This occurs when a youth in government care reaches the age of 19 and is no longer in the care of VACFSS or the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

AGREEMENTS WITH YOUNG ADULTS (AYA) - A program supporting people 19 to 24 years old transitioning/aging out of care.

BEST INTEREST: A term used to describe decisions, resources, and supports that are believed to be what the child/youth needs in order to do their best and reach their goals.

BEST PRACTICE: The best case scenario of how to do the work - with an understanding of feelings and trauma.

BURSARY - Money awarded by an educational institution (like a trade school or university) to those who can't afford to pay full tuition fees. This money does not need to be paid back.

CAREGIVER - A person designated by the government to be responsible for a child in care.

CONTINUING CUSTODY ORDER (CCO) - The legal document created by the court system that brings a young person fully into government care. It's also referred to as permanent ward, a ward of the court, or a ward of the government.

COUNSELLOR - A professional who spends time with you to address your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The agreement that anything shared between people will not be shared outside of that relationship. The agreement may be broken if the information shared puts someone in danger, or if it is required by law or court order.

CRISIS: Any event or period of time that will lead, or may lead, to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, family, group, or community.

CURRENT LEGISLATION: The rules and protocols that the Ministry of Child and Family Development operate by.

DIAGNOSIS: When a doctor or other professional identifies an illness or other concerns after looking at symptoms (example: a diagnosis can be given after an assessment (see definition of assessment)).

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES: Tools, training, and in-person support to help job seekers find work.

EMPOWER: To give someone the authority or power to do something.

EQUITABLE STANDARDS: Meeting the needs of all folks including those who have differing needs.

FOSTER CARE: A living arrangement for a child/youth who cannot live safely with their family of origin.

GLOSSARY OF SOCIAL WORK JARGON ~CONTINUED

FOSTER PARENT: Someone who acts as parent for a child/youth in place of their biological parents, without legally adopting the child.

GENOGRAM: Is a tool that often uses symbols to create a visual diagram of someone's family, relationships, and history.

GOVERNMENT CARE: Means anyone who has lived in foster homes, group homes, child and youth mental health services, addiction facilities, custody centres or independent living. If you were in one of those places you might have had one of these care statuses: youth agreements, , extended family placements, 54.1, continuing custody order, temporary custody order, or voluntary custody order.

GUARDIAN: Guardians are responsible for the care and upbringing of, and decision making about, a child/youth.

HARM REDUCTION: Refers to a range of policies and services designed to decrease the negative social and/or physical consequences that result from various behaviors (such as drug use), both legal and illegal.

HUMAN RIGHTS: Expectations of how you should be treated as a human, from birth until death, regardless of where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life.

IN CARE: See definition for Government Care.

INTERVENTION: Action taken to improve a situation (example: crisis intervention can involve short-term supports to help someone get through a difficult time).

LIFE SKILLS: Everyday skills that all young adults need to know as they become independent (saving money and budgeting, cooking and healthy eating, finding housing, finding a job, understanding physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health).

NON-CARE INVOLVED PEER: Another community member who may not be in foster care.

REFERRAL: An act of sending someone to a person or place where what is wanted or needed can be obtained (example: someone is referred to an Employment Service agency to get help with their resume, interview skills, and getting a job).

RESILIENCE: The ability to face and overcome challenges or change, and to move forward.

SELF-CARE: Strategies to promote healthy living (examples: getting enough sleep, learning stress management, and problem-solving).

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH: A way of supporting others that builds on their strengths (rather than focusing on their negative characteristics) and seeing them as resourceful and resilient when they face adversity. It also considers strengths in a person's environment, such as their relationships, culture, and community.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH: Recognizing how experiencing stress or harm, especially during childhood, can show up in our behaviours and capacity to handle certain situations that trigger us. This approach promotes a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing.

TURTLE ISLAND: What many local Indigenous people call the nation others know as Canada