



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

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.

Summer 2022 highlights:



A story from Elder April Bennett:
"Moons of Summer"

YAC IN ACTION!

- VACFSS-McCreary Centre Society Youth Research Opportunity
- Launching SIBS program
- Sage Picking
- Summer BBQ for youth in care
- Youth Leader Spotlight: Lexi
- Summer Newsletter Prize Giveaway!!

Community Resources
Glossary of Social Work Jargon

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.



Moons of Summer

A STORY FROM ELDER APRIL BENNETT, CULTURAL COORDINATOR

Many moons ago.....some of our stories begin this way. So many people think of the moon as a way of counting days or to explain how cold or hot it was during the story. Was it the time when the ice is cracking? Or when animals hid in the shade from the heat? We are all affected by the moon as the water is pulled and pushed from high tide to low tide.



We as women, the sacred life givers, are affected with 'moontime' and, for some families, the child rearing, cooking is taken over by their partner or husband due to how powerful women are during this time. So we like to name our moons like May when it's time to go pick seaweed, or when the flowers bloom so it's called Flower Moon to some. June is a time where the moon is called 'Strawberry Moon' and ceremony happens when the strawberries are ready to be picked many of our Eastern Indigenous

people celebrate this time. July, becomes the 'Buck Moon' where the male deer are about to grow antlers under the velvety skin on their heads. For some people it is a time when sockeye begins to run and canning is beginning. August has a 'Sturgeon' moon, perseverance of spirit. Such a fish has lasted throughout 1000 years or longer. The Algonquins call this time sturgeon moon, due to how easily the sturgeon are caught in the Great Lakes at this time of year.

On the Coast, it may be called the time when pink salmon arrives. Harvest moon can be a part of the Farmer's Almanac as farmers need this time of the full moon to harvest their large crops under the light of the full moon. Harvest moon is usually September. So our people refer to the moon in many different ways, however we are not the only ones who follow the moon. The Chinese, the settlers and farmers and the north, south, east and west worlds all were and still are impacted by the moon. Some have a different phase of moon that they follow; the waning and waxing of the moon from new moon to full moon. The Chinese will celebrate Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival held mid-autumn. This festival has many variations in Korea, Japan with dances, special homemade treats. We as a people follow moons as a way of telling what the year will look like such as "Hobiye" February moon and the way it is tilted. Most moons hold something sacred for all peoples, as it follows the seasons and that happens within. The summer moons are busy growing crops, knowing when it was time to pick berries, to pick certain medicines such as Labrador Tea, Devils club, when to go to pick Sage, when to dig clams and oysters and when the fish returned to their rivers and streams to spawn. Summer was a time of plenty and so much to do, canning, hanging fish to dry, drying foods and plants to make teas. For a millennia Indigenous peoples have used the moon to plan for life on the land. We believe it is the guardian of the Earth; when we are asleep, the moon rises and stays with us until it is time to go. This is an important part of our lives and tells a lot about what happens for all of us and the animals during the four seasons of fall, winter (when Mother Earth sleeps, spring (when Mother Earth becomes alive with plant life and animals), summer when everything is growing, fall when it is time to harvest it tells us we are alive and have many things to do to prepare for winter when Mother Earth sleeps. Take care everyone.

YAC in Action!



This season, the Youth Advisory Committee has welcomed new members, collaborated on a youth research opportunity with McCreary Centre Society, launched the new SIBS program, and is ecstatic to be able to participate in and lead events and gatherings that were on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic: Sage picking and a summer BBQ event for youth in care. We're excited to share with you what we've been up to!

VACFSS-McCreary Centre Society Youth Research Opportunity

In our Spring Newsletter, Amber told you about a joint partnership youth research group between us (VACFSS/YAC) and the McCreary Centre Society. The research project we are working on together aims to connect with Indigenous youth in and from care about what supports are available in community and what could be helpful in reducing risky substance use in youth.

We will be conducting focus groups in person this fall and want you to participate! Focus groups will be facilitated by Youth Research Assistants involved with the project. You'll get a chance to use your voice and share your expertise, as well as share a meal with other youth and receive an honorarium for your time.

If you are interested in participating or would like to learn more you can ask your social worker about this opportunity or contact :

Jessica Knutson, Child & Youth Engagement
jessica_knutson@vacfss.com | 604-216-6136

Launching the **SIBS** Program

~ WRITTEN BY AMBER

The idea for the Supportive Indigenous Brothers and Sisters (SIBS) program was first brought up at our YAC retreat in 2019. Planning for the program started in the new year of 2021 and we just had our first outing July 23 2022! My pod went to Capilano Suspension Bridge. We saw some birds, did the tree top and cliff walks, got some food and bought crystals at the gift shop. The other pods went to an escape room and science world. A highlight of the first outing from one of the other groups was seeing them start out as being very shy, but then watching them slowly warm up and get more comfortable, and having fun by the end. Another highlight from a different group was how they bonded fast even with a small group and got to do an activity that they could learn from. A highlight from my group would be the conversations we had while eating together

If you're interested in being part of the SIBS program, you can talk to their social worker, or visit the SIBS webpage and fill out a form there!

<https://www.vacfss.com/programs/supportive-indigenous-brothers-and-sisters-sibs-program/>



Sage Picking in Merritt, B.C.

~ WRITTEN BY NEHEMIAS



When I went sage picking, it was such a wonderful experience. To be honest, I was not in a good place at the time. But as my dad use to tell me "say yes to some adventures instead of no" so I forced myself out of bed and went to sage picking up in Merritt.

The ride up itself was beautiful, the scenery was outstanding, the music was bumping, the chips were extra crunchy, and the company was even better. A handful of us drove up in a van together, there and back. Little did I know, picking sage was exactly what I needed. It was so therapeutic. The regalia, the food, and most importantly the community. Almost a good hundred of us, all gathered in one room, celebrating the fact that we all came together after a 2 year delay because of the pandemic. After food, gifts, smiles, and laughs. We all head out in our vehicles, and formed a train to the sage hills. It was an experience and a half. It brought me out of the place I was and into a safe, comfortable space.

Sage picking was a very well put together program, it meant everything to me. So next year when it happens again. You'll know where to find me.



Summer BBQ for Youth in Care

~ WRITTEN BY DORI & LEXI



This year, YAC decided to do a summer BBQ instead of our usual youth conference. We had it at Douglas College in Coquitlam on the traditional and ancestral lands of the *kʷikwə́łəm* (Kwikwetlem), *sq̓əciyaʔ təməxʷ* (Katzie), and other Coast Salish Peoples.

It turned out to be actually really great, and a ton of the youth showed up. In the morning it was a down pour, but when most of the youth started to showed up the skies turned blue, hurray! We had an amazing pow wow dancer teach our youth some traditional dancing. We had booths of shaved ice machine, goodies, games, tie dye, tug of war, and prizes for the youth.

The BBQ was a great time all around and we hope to do it again next year!!





Youth Leader Spotlight: **Lexi**



I joined the Youth Advisory Committee at the start of the pandemic, so it was a little hard to get used to and feel like I connected with the group because I couldn't see anyone in person. Though as time moved forward, I got to know the rest of the members in the committee better and we had a blast every time we met over zoom.

YAC has helped me be more comfortable and confident using my voice, stating my needs or my concerns and just having this community where I know that I am accepted. With them, I got to do my first speech at Douglas College about what YAC is all about and what we thrive to do. It was really scary because I don't like public speaking but I felt really supported by my fellow members.

Summer Newsletter Prize Giveaway!!

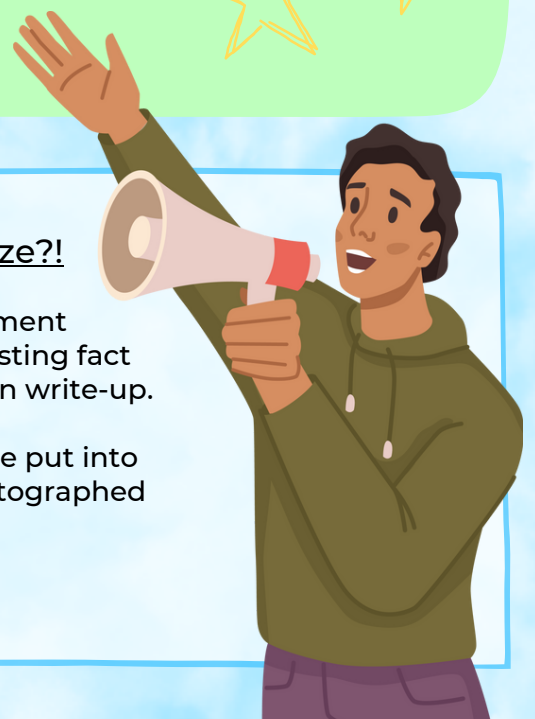


Want a chance to win this season's newsletter prize?!

Send an email to Jessica Knutson in Child & Youth Engagement (jessica_knutson@vacfss.com) with the following: an interesting fact you learnt about the moon when reading Elder April's moon write-up.

Each person who answers the question will have their name put into a draw for a chance to win a canvas print of the moon, photographed by Eloi – the Moon Guy!

Check out his work at: <https://themoonguyshop.com/>



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

Youth Resources

RED FOX HEALTHY LIVING SOCIETY

info@redfoxsociety.org | 604-343-6536 | <https://redfoxsociety.org/>

Red Fox Society offers Mentorship and Employment Training programs:

Youth Leadership

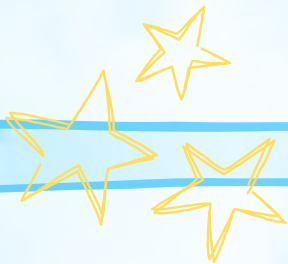
Gives youth who face barriers a unique opportunity to develop practical skills that help them to succeed in employment and in life. For ages 11yrs-19yrs

Seed Generation

Gives youth hands-on experiences creating wildlife habitat and an Indigenous foodscape garden in Strathcona Park. For ages 15yrs-18yrs

Youth Internship

Youth Interns get hands-on experience of everything that it takes to successfully plan and run Red Fox's children's programs, while receiving continued support and mentorship from Red Fox staff in employment and life skills. This program is available to ages 18yrs+



GIRLS WHO LEAP

<https://www.girlswholeap.com/>

Girls Who LEAP: Lead to Empower & Act with Purpose is a registered non-profit volunteer-run society that provides leadership and mentorship opportunities as well as wrap-around supports for female-identifying and non-binary youth participants

Participants:

Over 120+ girls involved between grades 6-12+
Represented by over 25+ nations across turtle island and world
80% high schoolers, 20% elementary pre-teens, 100% potential

Mentors

All our mentors are volunteers who have a deep passion and love for youth and the DTES community.



More Youth Resources

FOUNDRY
<https://foundrybc.ca/>

Foundry offers young people ages 12-24 health and wellness resources, services and supports online and through integrated service centres in communities across BC.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Youth Employment Connect – Training for Jobs
<https://successbc.ca/yec/?filter=youth>

Youth explore and advance their careers in the growing marketing and sales or information and communication technology sectors of BC. Our integrated program offers three weeks of skills training along with coaching and financial supports.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Youth Leadership Millennium
<https://successbc.ca/ylm/?filter=youth>

The Youth Leadership Millennium (YLM) is an 8-month program dedicated to helping young people aged 15-30 in areas of personal and leadership development.

Focus areas:

- personal development
- leadership development
- community awareness
- adventure expedition

Our three eligibility criteria are:

- Anyone between ages of 15 to 30 years
- Canadian citizens or permanent residents
- Reside in Metro Vancouver

VACFSS Events Calendar
<https://www.vacfss.com/events-calendar/>

Did you know VACFSS has an event calendar?

Check out the webpage above and see upcoming events in your community! There are a variety of opportunities for youth to participate in, and many are hosted by organizations that are great resources for programs and services that you may be looking for!

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