



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Youth in Care Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
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Statement on the Report of the Expert Panel on the Deaths of Children and Youth in Residential Placements

Ottawa, Ontario, September 26th, 2018—It is with a heavy heart approaching [Orange Shirt Day](#), that Youth in Care Canada (YICC) responds to “[Safe With Intervention: The Report of the Expert Panel on the Deaths of Children and Youth in Residential Placements](#)”, a report from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario addressing the deaths of 12 young people living in residential care in Ontario between January 2014 and July 2017.

First and foremost, we extend our sorrow and thoughts to the families, friends, and other individuals who were touched by the presence of the 12 formidable young people at the centre of the report. As an organization run by and for former youth in care, we have been affected by similar circumstances too often and know that the stories of these young people could well have been our own.

These young people were: Danny, Anaya*, Jazmine*, Tyra, Justin, Azraya, Kanina, Jolynn, Cassandra, Amy, Brooklyn*, and Ashley*. They were bright, creative, caring, athletic, and overwhelmingly resilient.

We know that eight of the young people died by suicide, one by homicide, and the other three deaths have been ruled as accidental or unknown. Sadly, we believe that even with this report, the families have not received the answers and [justice they deserve](#).

It’s been said before

In response to the report, the Ontario Child Advocate, Irwin Elman stated: “[Enough is enough](#)”. We could not agree more. For years we have repeatedly witnessed the same tragedies, calls to action, and unfortunately, no change. As the panel acknowledges, this report echoes many others in response to related incidents in years past. Though not exhaustive, similar recommendations can be found in:

- [Because Young People Matter – Report of the Residential Services Review Panel \(2016\)](#)
- [Searching for Home: Reimagining Residential Care \(2016\)](#)
- [Doing it Right Together for Black Youth \(2018\)](#)
- [The Office of the Chief Coroner’s Death Review of the Youth Suicides at the Pikangikum First Nation \(2006-2008\) \(2011\)](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation: Calls to Action \(2015\)](#)
- [The Office of the Chief Coroner Inquest – First Nations Youth \(2016\)](#)
- [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples \(1996\)](#)

We call on the Federal and Provincial governments to take action on the mountains of evidence and recommendations that already exist and to take all measures necessary to implement the recommendations of the Expert Panel, young people, and their communities through the allocation of sufficient resources and bold steps forward to enact systemic changes in policy and practice.

Everyone Has a Role to Play: Holding Our Healthcare System Accountable

The child welfare system bears only part of the responsibility for these deaths. Every one of these young people interacted with professionals from numerous sectors, be it health, education, or justice. We must take collective responsibility for these tragedies and proceed with shared ownership and burden to protect young people who need it the most.

In particular, there is a common thread in the trajectories of these young people: they had all been assessed, evaluated, or entered into healthcare settings in crisis situations. In most circumstances, these young people were inadequately serviced or discharged without a plan of care—despite repeated visits to the same facilities. The report notes that in fact, some were apparently “blacklisted” from being admitted to hospitals or characterized as merely “attention-seeking”, passing responsibility to the child protection system despite there being no evidence to guide assumptions that they were receiving adequate supports.

We call on Indigenous Services Canada, the Ontario government, children's aid societies, health care and service providers, the justice sector, and education staff to deeply consider how they can act with accountability in light of the deaths of these young people and immediately incorporate the report's recommendations into their work.

We further call upon the Canadian Medical Association and Canadian Paediatric Society to develop clinical practice guidelines to provide sensitive and appropriate care to youth being serviced by child protection, particularly in crisis situations.

Moving on Indigenous Child Welfare

YICC stands in solidarity with the families of the young people and [Nishnawbe Aski Nation](#), home to 6 of the 12 youth. Per our [previous requests](#) to the Federal government, most recently Minister Philpott, YICC urges the Federal government to step in and take responsibility for the fragmented and unaccountable child welfare systems across the country. There are more Indigenous children in the child welfare system today than at the height of residential schools. We look forward to the tabling of the National Indigenous Child Welfare Legislation this Fall and strongly urge the government to ensure Indigenous communities and youth have a more concerted role to play in its formulation and implementation. Many of these young people were placed in facilities hundreds of kilometres away from their communities. We, therefore, call for an immediate review of Indigenous youth in residential placements, and a plan to service them closer and in consultation with their communities.

For any inquiries, please email us at info@youthincare.ca

About Youth in Care Canada:

Youth in Care Canada is a national, charitable organization driven by youth in and from Canada's child welfare systems. YICC exists to voice the opinions and concerns of youth in and from care and provides resources and support to help them achieve their goals.