

the drop

ON YOUR RIGHT... TO EXPRESS YOURSELF!

THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE Newsletter for Youth

SPRING 2014

THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC) is an international

agreement between many countries around the world. The UNCRC has been in place since 1989 and gives children and youth all over the world more than 40 major human rights. Canada was one country that agreed to protect and promote the rights of all children & youth under 18.



Art © Andy Everson

UNCRC Article 13

You have the right to learn and share information, as long as it doesn't harm other people.

In this edition of our newsletter, we explore UNCRC Article 13:

Your right to LEARN
and
SHARE what you
know.

Article 13
(FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION):
Children & youth have
THE RIGHT to get and
share information, as long as the
information is not damaging to them
or others. In exercising freedom of
expression, they have
THE RESPONSIBILITY
to also respect the rights, freedoms
and reputations of others.
This includes the right to share
information in any way they choose,
including by talking, drawing or
writing.^{1,2}

FOR ME,
POETRY WAS... THE
FASTEST WAY TO
EXPRESS WHAT I WAS
FEELING, WHAT I WAS
GOING THROUGH.

SHANE KOYCZAN

See more →

"The only person you are destined to become
is the person you decide to be." Ralph Waldo Emerson



Provincial Advocate
for Children & Youth

Children's
Advocate

Canadian Mental
Health Commission

www.thesmoothpathoriginal.net



JOIN US @ M.A.S.S.I.V.E.!

At Voices we help youth in and from care share their stories and opinions in safe, powerful ways to create positive change in the system. For years, youth in care across Canada have used their voices to raise awareness on issues that matter. Sometimes we speak at conferences or write reports. Sometimes we find more creative ways to share. What matters is that you are making your voice heard, and that people hear you.

JOIN US AT M.A.S.S.I.V.E., our week-long multimedia summer workshop! Learn how to use different tools to express yourself, like 'zines, photography, painting, playwriting, dancing, and radio. This year we're leaving the city to explore non-electronic ways to communicate. M.A.S.S.I.V.E. Unplugged is July 14th to 18th, for youth in and from care ages 12-18. More info and registration forms will be available soon, so stay tuned!

There are so many ways to make your voice heard. If you would like help or support, please let us know! This is your Network, we're here to help.

WWW.VOICES.MB.CA

@VoicesMYICN

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/VOICESMB

Joey Lecoy rhymes to tell his stories and connect with people. We are **so honoured** to feature his amazing poem, **ALONE** in this issue of **the drop**
#cominUP #respect

I LOVE YOU

When I'm not talking to you, I'm thinking of you.

When you're away, I'm hurting inside for you.

Heart sinking,

Belly aching,

Mind numbing

Hurt for you.

I miss you.

A youth in care tells us how it feels to be separated from the people important to him in his life.

"**CREATIVE WORK IS NOT A SELFISH ACT OR A BID FOR ATTENTION ON THE PART OF THE ACTOR. IT'S A GIFT TO THE WORLD AND EVERY BEING IN IT. DON'T CHEAT US OF YOUR CONTRIBUTION. GIVE US WHAT YOU'VE GOT!**"

~Steven Pressfield

the mini drop: people want to hear your story!



Erica Daniels is a risk taker. Although she describes herself as a shy child growing up, Erica did not allow herself to avoid the opportunities that life presented. Now at the age of 22, she is an impressive force. Well-spoken, motivated, engaging & creative, she speaks freely about the importance of creative expression in the lives of youth.

Youth benefit from opportunities to express their stories.

Erica adds that telling those stories artistically is a valuable way for youth to let go of the emotion without having to reveal the story is really about themselves. Using the arts to express personal experience protects young people from feeling too raw or exposed since people don't necessarily know if what is described is based on a true story or not.

When asked if she has any advice for children or youth who feel they have a story to tell, Erica says, "*Push yourself and take advantage of every opportunity. Try – no matter what!*" She says that she learned through her experiences with Broadway Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) and Just TV that, "*people want to hear your story.*" She speaks fondly of BNC, noting that the staff take an approach of building relationships with each youth who is involved, and that through her initial involvement as a youth participant at 16 she found outlets to talk about her experiences, mentors to guide her, and peers who shared similar stories.

"In today's society, it is hard to keep young people engaged or for them to communicate the issues they might face in life. I find that music and video is a fun way for them to really express what is deep down inside them."

Erica Daniels is originally from Peguis First Nation, born and raised in Winnipeg, MB. She is a technical assistant and youth facilitator with Just TV, a media coordinator with Native Communications Inc. and Streetz FM, and also runs her own video and photography production company, where she continues to use her talents to help other people tell their stories. In 2013, Erica was awarded a Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Award in Artistic: Visual for her work in film and photography. For more information <HTTP://ERICAMARIEPRODUCTIONS.COM/>

ALONE

by Joey Lecoy

Growing up I felt **confused**
didn't know who I really was,
Removed from my biological family.
Uprooted.

Placed in CFS at the age of 3 to remain a
permanent ward until 18
I was always told "**my mama loves me**"
I think about my dad and ask,

Who was he?

Was he a thinker? I know he was a drinker
Even though I didn't know him, he had
A PROBLEM WITH ANGER
It doesn't hurt when I think about him,
because I can't mourn for a stranger
So I never had a father figure, I struggled
And it constantly ate at me
I felt alienated,
hated because of my skin tone
In a white home, with a white fence,
I felt all **ALONE**

At school, I felt different; I couldn't do my
work unless I was shown
Diagnosed with ADHD, to a certain extent it
meant nothing to me.
Because I did not understand, all I knew was
I could not focus
And that nothing made sense;
I kept dreading going back to the home with
the white fence.

I began feeling angry because I came to an
age where I knew something was wrong
But I didn't know what,
I was still **too young & childish**
to realize that,

I was an overactive, hyper-packed kid with
an anger problem
I laugh as I'm writing this because
I'm painting a picture in my mind
Of myself, with endless energy,
running for hours.
I just see it as funny,
'cause in the picture I'm younger
And I used to be fat
I was teased

but I'd rather not write about that
Because it still makes me mad to this day.
The only time I was happy was when I was
with my friend Dee, he was exactly like me
But his life was reversed

He was white in a brown home alienated,

ALONE.

We clicked
like the Lego blocks that we played with
I hated who I stayed with,
vice versa for Dee

Growing up we grew apart I had to move to
a different foster home
He went his way and me I went my own.
I grew some new roots
then they were **ripped back up**, and it
stung because the pain was still raw,
I moved on and fell down
More than once, twice or thrice,
I felt I had nothing
So I made some bad choices.
Joined a gang, did some drugs
I never, ever dreamed
of taking on the role of a thug,

Gradually my soul became corrupt, like the
wings on the Fallen Angel

BECOMING DARKER WITH TIME

The light in my life faded I couldn't see the
end of my tunnel vision
Depressed I felt helpless.

ALONE

And I hated it; still hate it,
the feeling of hopelessness
We became well acquainted,
my innocence tainted
MY SOUL REMAINS STAINED,
how I wish I could bleach it
I used to think happiness
was too far for me to reach it.
Violence and Pain became my friends,
hated my nature

My words tell a story but my SCARS tell it better.

My heart became calloused before I started
writing my ballads
On ballots of paper,
they meant nothing to me
Little did I know I was expressing myself
When I couldn't do it verbally
without cursing
I'd write verses about caskets and hearses
These were my dark times
When I still felt gangster, I embraced it
I started rapping for kicks
I saw the most BEAUTIFUL girl
watching me spit,
Rhyme and rhyme
Time after time,
I saw her, before we finally spoke
She told my life story as her own
My heart broke,

She grew up **ALONE.**

And we clicked like my homies
hanging out in the hood
She had problems like I had mine,
results from our pasts
We spent a lot of time together
We could weather the weather
My heart made of leather,
became softened for her
I got arrested and locked away;
she'd always send letters,
Then on **Valentine's Day**,
I got one piece of paper,

Only half-written with no effort at all. It said

*"Joey, I'm sorry,
but I've waited too long,
I'm moving on
I'll always love you.
Keep your head up,
STAY STRONG"*

It hurt. Once again my heart broke
This time I was confined with nothing but my
thoughts
And inside a part of me died
I asked myself,
*"Who sends a letter like that
On Valentine's Day?"*

I moved on once again,
Once again, I was **ALONE**.

I hurt for a while, I'd dream of her smile,
Her perfume in my dreams so realistic
it seemed
She was right next to me
Then I awoke she was gone
I took the time to write her a song but I
never did send it because it all felt too wrong
Like the lines weren't
just right
Eventually I realized I was wasting my time
Holding onto broken dreams even though
they were fine
Enough to make an Angel cry

I moved on for good this time.

It was around this time
I started showing people my poetry
I was shy at first because
I wasn't used to the praise
And it wasn't like me,
Wasn't who I was supposed to be
A relatively well-known gang member,
quick to temper to be writing poetry?
It was **unheard of**,
UNTHINKABLE, a TABOO
I'm glad I stuck with it
Or else I'd still be stuck in that same place
where I was,
Robbing and stealing. That wasn't really me.
Just a masquerade to hide the pain.

I'm trying to change.

Sometimes I think about
my dysfunctional life and I ask myself
how the hell did I survive?

All the things I've went through, there has to
be a reason...
There was a point in my life where I thought
burning (in hell) would be
better than freezing in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
But that was when I was blinded by my
anger and sorrow
When I never used to care about yesterday
or tomorrow
Now I'm more **optimistic**,
I found a sense of belonging
I'm working on

LEAVING THE GANG BEHIND,

But it's entrenched in my mentality
It was reality for me, I got used to it

I'm 17 now;
I don't know what happened to Dee.
Is he alive, and well,
or did he end up like me?
What happened to me? Who am I?
Still don't know, confused as ever
more or less **ALONE**.

I'm happier now, I'm more optimistic
A new set of roots in Poetry, I can grow.
Blossom
Create a new life and I think it's awesome.

When I write a new Poem,
I no longer feel ALONE.

YOU ARE UNIQUE!

If someone asks you: **WHO ARE YOU?**

Do you know how to describe yourself and what is important to you? Think about your answers to these questions as a place to start:

Do you have a nickname?

What are you really good at doing?

What makes you laugh out loud?

How would your friends describe you?

Where would you love to travel?

If you were an animal, what would you be?

If you are spring cleaning, what can you toss? What do you need to keep?

What have you done

that makes you proud of yourself?

What makes you a good friend?

Do you have a mentor?

Do you have a motto?

To write well,
express
yourself
like the common
people,
but think
like a wise man.
- Aristotle

"ART DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PRETTY. IT HAS TO BE MEANINGFUL."

~DUANE HANSON

DO YOU HAVE A STORY
TO TELL?
WE WANT TO HEAR IT!

TELL US ABOUT:
YOUR TIME IN CARE,
SOMEONE WHO INSPIRES YOU,
SOMEONE YOU COUNT ON,
THINGS YOU WONDER ABOUT,
LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED...

CALL US TO SUBMIT YOUR
ORIGINAL WORK!



SOURCES

WHEN I SAY **ARTIST** I MEAN THE ONE WHO IS BUILDING THINGS - SOME WITH A BRUSH
- SOME WITH A SHOVEL - SOME CHOOSE A PEN. ~JACKSON POLLOCK

1. Official transcript/UNCRC excerpt: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
2. Article 13 interpretation from: http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf
3. Graffiti Dance - <http://graffiti-alphabet-letters.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Dance-Graffiti.jpg>
4. Don't be afraid image - http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lu1qd0lLxv1r5g51do1_500.jpg
5. To write well image <http://static4.quoteswave.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/To-write-well.jpg>
6. Be yourself image http://www.searchquotes.com/sof/images/picture_quotes/55171_20130702_032029_tumblr_mp3slzslrb1qe49wpo1_500.jpg
7. Graffiti heart painting <http://davidgerstein.us/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/David-Gerstein-GRAFFITI-HEART-480x482.jpg>

OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE

100-346 Portage Ave Winnipeg, MB R3C 0C3

(204) 988-7440 or 1-800-263-7146 toll free in Manitoba

ON TWITTER @OCAADVOCATE
OR FIND US AT FACEBOOK.COM/OCAADVOCATE
[WWW.CHILDRENSADVOCATE.MB.CA](http://www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca)

