

A PLACE WHERE IT FEELS LIKE HOME: THE STORY OF TINA FONTAINE

SPECIAL REPORT SUMMARY FOR YOUTH

What Is This Report About?

Tina Fontaine was 15 years old when she died. She was in the care of child and family services (CFS). It is the job of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (the Manitoba Advocate) to look at all child deaths in Manitoba. When children are in care, the Manitoba Advocate sometimes creates public special reports. The goal of a special report is to improve services for all children and youth in Manitoba and learn from the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC).

How Did We Write The Report?

To write the report the Manitoba Advocate looked at files from organizations that worked with Tina. The team from the Manitoba Advocate also did interviews with Tina’s family, community, and workers. They also met with the government to check that the information in the report was correct. The Manitoba Advocate also met with Indigenous governments and talked to members of the Manitoba Advocate’s Youth Ambassador Advisory Squad (YAAS). YAAS team members provide a youth-centred perspective about the work carried out by the Manitoba Advocate. The YAAS team presents youth-led and youth-informed suggestions and recommendations to MACY on best care practices

“This report matters to me because Tina and I share a demographic, [we are] young Indigenous women from care” – YAAS Member

What Did We Find?

Children and youth have the right to receive help when they are hurt or mistreated, in body or in mind

(UNCRC Article 19)

Tina’s dad was murdered when she was 12 years old.

This was very traumatic for Tina.

The school, mental health services, child and family services, and victim services did not provide Tina with the supports she needed.

Children and youth have the right to be protected from harm and exploitation

(UNCRC Article 34)

Tina struggled with her grief and wanted to find a sense of belonging.

Over time, she became disconnected from healthy supports at school and in her family.

Systems did not protect Tina from dangers in the community such as sexual exploitation.

What Are The Recommendations?

1. Education

Review and improve how schools help children and youth who stop going to school, use suspensions, and work to end the use of suspensions.

2. Mental Health

Implement the findings about mental health services youth need that were in the report by government called The Virgo Report.

3. Victim Services

Listen to children and youth, include them in service plans, and provide services when they need them.

4. Child and Family Services

Improve the law to protect youth who are being exploited. Develop a safe and secure home-like place for youth who are exploited so they can get treatment & support to heal.

5. Sexual Exploitation

Create plans for all missing children and youth, and make sure they get the help they need 24/7.

STATEMENT FOR YOUTH BY YOUTH

Tina was a friend, a family member, and a victim. Her story affects everybody. This report matters to us because people should be aware of what happened to her and understand that it has happened to others as well.

There has to be changes made to the resources available to young Indigenous women so that they can be further away from the possibility of being hurt or murdered. We need awareness so that we can change how families and kids in care receive support from everyone.

We hope this story can bring change because her story is so similar to many of us. Our hope is that the systems will manage their duties to children properly. They need to understand how to help. Children need to grow up in a safe, caring environment. Allow children to be heard and encourage them to speak up and work with them through difficult situations.

Youth can make change happen, so things like this stop happening.