

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MEMENGWAA WIIDOODAAGEWIN (BUTTERFLY PROJECT): MANITOBA ADVOCATE RELEASES
A SPECIAL REPORT TO HONOUR EISHIA HUDSON**

Advocate makes four findings and issues four recommendations to address provincial public service gaps and systemic barriers that affect children, youth, and young adults in Manitoba.

TREATY 1 TERRITORY AND HOMELAND OF THE RED RIVER MÉTIS, Winnipeg, Man., June 22, 2023 —

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) released *Memengwaa Wiidoodaagewin (Butterfly Project)*, a special report in honour of Eishia Hudson, who died as a result of a gunshot wound inflicted by a member of the Winnipeg Police Service on April 8, 2020. Empowered by *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act (ACYA)*, the report assesses the public services that were received by Eishia and her family prior to her death with the goal of increasing the effectiveness and responsiveness of those services, while also honouring Eishia’s story.

“Our entire team extends our sincerest gratitude to Eishia Hudson’s family for meeting with us and sharing personal stories about Eishia,” said Manitoba Advocate Sherry Gott. “It was important to our office to develop this report in collaboration and consultation with her family, Elders, community members, community leaders, Indigenous governing bodies, service providers, and subject matter experts to ensure we had a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the issues at hand.”

An essential element of the investigation was understanding the story of Eishia Hudson, and how her family experienced, navigated, and were impacted by public services in Manitoba. Eishia’s family shared stories about her life, and helped MACY understand Eishia’s life beyond the service files the office reviewed. As Gott explains, “Eishia was daughter, a sister, an auntie, a friend, a student, a caregiver, a community member, an athlete, and a close one to so many. Her legacy will be one that will be honoured and remembered for years to come.”

Structured in three parts, the *Memengwaa Wiidoodaagewin* report follows Eishia’s life based on MACY’s investigation into the provincial public services that were provided to her and her family from the start of her life until her death. The second section focuses on youth-police interactions, outlining opportunities for collaborative solutions to address youth experiences of systemic racism. The third section looks closely at strength-based wraparound supports, focusing on protective factors and how Manitoba can ensure all children and youth have access to effective services.

Based on a detailed review and analysis of the provincial public services provided to Eishia and the individual-, family-, and community-level environments involved in her life, the Manitoba Advocate is making four findings and issuing four recommendations. They are as follows:

FINDING 1: Eishia was never charged with a criminal offence, but contact with the Winnipeg Police Service is documented throughout her life. This experience is not singular to Eishia, and is reiterated in the life story of many children and youth who come into contact with MACY. The potential negative consequences of police contact, or experiencing a violent confrontation,

indicate that unnecessary and punitive contact must be mitigated when in the best interests of children and youth.

FINDING 2: When reflecting on their individual and community experiences, some youth described experiences with police as characterized by violence, verbal abuse/threats, negative and unprofessional conduct, being judged based on their past/community affiliations, not being helped, and racial discrimination. These experiences resulted in some young people feeling distrustful of police, uncomfortable around them, holding strong negative feelings, and feeling the need to be hypervigilant to mitigate interactions.

FINDING 3: Young people have a tremendous amount of insight into what they are going through, what they need, and how the relationships between Black, Indigenous, and other racialized youth and police can be improved.

FINDING 4: School-based wraparound services provided to Eishia by the COACH 1 program responded to Eishia's needs and are consistent with the principles of Article 28 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC).

RECOMMENDATION 1: MACY recommends that the Government of Manitoba provide the resources necessary for the development of a youth model of the Alternative Response to Citizens in Crisis (ARCC) program.

RECOMMENDATION 2: MACY recommends that Manitoba Justice, through the Public Safety Training Strategy Steering Committee, engage in appropriate community consultation with children and youth, youth-serving organizations, and experts in child and youth development, to ensure the final products of the Public Safety Training Strategy are informed by a youth-centred, anti-oppressive, and trauma-informed lens.

RECOMMENDATION 3: MACY recommends that Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, in collaboration with Manitoba Mental Health and Community Wellness, and all additional partners of COACH, provide the resources necessary to conclude, and make public, an evaluation of COACH 1, and the COACH Expansion Site programs.

RECOMMENDATION 4: MACY recommends that Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, in collaboration with all school divisions, expand the availability of wraparound services (i.e. school engagement support services or programs tailored to student, school, or community need) in school divisions across Manitoba.

“Fundamentally, the findings in this report stress that it is essential that young people are consistently afforded the opportunity to express their voices, have resources and supports via community-led responses, and have their input integrated into institutions to ensure authentic change occurs,” stated Gott. “The recommendations put forward today, when implemented, hold the potential to bring about meaningful and lasting change to address systemic shortcomings, fostering a more equitable and just future for all young people in Manitoba.”

Read the *Memengwaa Wiidoodaagewin (Butterfly Project): Honouring Eishia Hudson* report here: <https://manitobaadvocate.ca/reports-publications/special-reports/>

About the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth:

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) is an independent, non-partisan office of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. It represents the rights, interests, and viewpoints of children, youth, and young adults throughout Manitoba who are receiving or entitled to public services, including child and family, adoption, disability, mental health, addictions, education, victim supports, or youth justice. MACY does this by advocating directly with children and youth, or on their behalf with caregivers and other stakeholders. Advocacy also involves reviewing public services after the death of any young person when that young person or their family was involved with a reviewable service as defined in *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act (ACYA)*. Additionally, MACY is empowered under provincial law to make recommendations to government and other public bodies, conduct child-centred research, disseminate findings, and educate the public on children's rights and any other matter under the ACYA.

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