



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**YOUTH AMBASSADOR ADVISORY SQUAD AT MACY RELEASES SPECIAL REPORT
CALLING FOR CHANGE IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**

Report examines experiences of youth in care, including challenges faced and opportunities to make real and lasting change

**MARCH 26, 2026 – TREATY 1 TERRITORY AND NATIONAL HOMELAND OF THE RED RIVER MÉTIS,
Winnipeg, Man.**

Today, the Youth Ambassador Advisory Squad (YAAS) at MACY released its special report, *Niigan nakeyaa Oshkinawe The Truth of the Youth: Centring Youth Voices and Solutions for Thriving Futures in and beyond Government Care*.

The report is the result of a multi-year project entirely led by youth. What started as a shared concern for the well-being of young people in care in Manitoba, turned into an innovative peer-led project designed to listen to young people with lived experience, validate and learn from their experiences, amplify their voices, and advocate for meaningful change within Manitoba's child welfare system. Youth led the work throughout the entirety of the project, including drafting interview questions, interviewing other youth with lived experience, analyzing and collating data, writing portions of the report, contributing to its design, and more.

Findings Highlight Key Gaps, Areas for Change

The Truth of the Youth amplifies the voices of 17 young people, most of them Indigenous, who have lived through Manitoba's child welfare system. Told largely in their own words, their stories illuminate six youth-identified themes:

1. Treatment and Care
2. Culturally-Safe Care and Services
3. Learning, Education, and Life Skills
4. Transitioning Out of Care
5. What is a Home?
6. Listen to the Kids!



Together, these themes reveal persistent and deeply rooted patterns of instability, disconnection, harm, and unmet needs. These are not isolated experiences – they reflect systemic and structural failures that continue to shape the lives of young people long after they leave care. Although the project began with a focus on the transition out of care, a deeper truth emerged: **the experiences young people have while they are in care profoundly shape how they leave it, and whether they are able to thrive afterward.**

The stories shared throughout this report paint a clear and urgent picture of what it means to grow up in and age out of care in Manitoba. Across every theme explored, young people described a system that too often failed to protect, support, nurture, prepare, and listen to them. Their experiences highlight gaps that cannot be attributed to individual circumstances, but are the result of long-standing systemic and structural issues that require coordinated, meaningful change.

This report is not simply a record of what has gone wrong. **It is a call to action.** The youth who contributed to this project have already done the difficult work of identifying the gaps and imagining better possibilities. Their recommendations offer a clear roadmap for transformation. Young people in care are asking for stability, protection from harm, consistent support, connection, meaningful relationships, culturally-safe care, and adequate preparation for adulthood. These are not extravagant asks – they are fundamental rights.

It is now the responsibility of policymakers, service providers, caregivers, advocates, and communities to act on what the youth have shared. Listening to young people must become the foundation of every decision, every policy, and every practice within the child welfare system.

Acknowledging the Leaders of Change

While many individuals played a role in this project, the remarkable young people who shared their time, stories, wisdom, and recommendations with YAAS for this project deserve recognition. Their courage and voices are vital to deepening our understanding of how young people experience Child and Family Services, and for shaping a better future for all youth.

We extend our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the incredible and inspiring YAAS members who poured their hearts and souls into this project and showed what youth-led work and action can achieve. They have clearly demonstrated that meaningful change is not something that happens to them, but something they are actively creating.



As the YAAS members said themselves, **"This report is a powerful example of youth-driven and youth-led work shaping real change. We didn't just contribute ideas, we designed the project, recruited the participants, conducted the interviews, analyzed the data, and supported the write up. Being involved in this way is not only empowering, it shows what's possible when young people are trusted not just as active participants, but also as leaders of change."**

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About the Youth Ambassador Advisory Squad:

YAAS is a group of youth representatives from across Manitoba who use their voices and lived experiences to drive meaningful change in the services and systems that impact young people. Their mission is to be role models who support and advocate for youth throughout the province. Their vision is a community that recognizes the power of young people to lead change. Together, these commitments reflect their dedication to collaborative planning and youth centred decision making. Through regular meetings and participation in training sessions, presentations, and advocacy events, YAAS members offer valuable input, advice, and feedback that strengthens the voice of young people in Manitoba's youth-serving systems and services. Their work is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Seven Sacred Teachings (Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, and Truth), and grounded in the core values outlined in the YAAS Code of Conduct.

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. The office represents the rights, interests, and viewpoints of children, youth, and young adults throughout Manitoba who are receiving, or should be receiving, provincial public services. MACY does this by providing direct advocacy support to young people and their families, by reviewing public service delivery after the death or serious injury of a child, and by conducting child-centred research regarding the effectiveness of public services in Manitoba. The Manitoba Advocate is empowered by legislation to make recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of services provided to children, youth, and young adults. MACY is mandated through The Advocate for Children and Youth Act, guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and acts according to the best interests of children and youth.

