

Advocate for Children and Youth Celebrates National Child Day

SASKATOON – As we mark National Child Day on Monday November 20th, Corey O’Soup, the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, along with, the Canadian Council for Child and Youth Advocates are encouraging federal, provincial and municipal governments, and all Canadians, to remember and adhere to the fundamental rights of children and youth.

National Child Day commemorates Canada’s ratification of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, which sets out the basic human rights to which children under the age of 18 are entitled. These rights were approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 and ratified by Canada in 1991. The Convention states that governments formally acknowledge that children have rights, and ensure that these rights are respected.

Unfortunately, there continues to be little understanding of the *UNCRC* rights. Among its 54 articles, the *UNCRC* ensures that children have the right be heard (Article 12) the right to food, clothing and shelter (Article 27), the right to practice one’s own culture (Article 30), the right be free from abuse (Articles 19, 34, 35, 36, 37) the right to health care (Article 24) and education (Article 28).

O’Soup has been vocal in advocating for the rights of Saskatchewan children and youth since starting his term, and more recently has been speaking publicly for children to receive the highest standard of health care, specifically related to mental health. Article 24 of the *UNCRC* states that, “Children and youth have a right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.”

“I think we can all agree that more needs to be done for our children as many of them are not receiving the timely treatment or access to services they so desperately need”, said O’Soup. This comment comes as the Advocate is about to release a special report on youth suicide in northern Saskatchewan in early December.

On National Child Day, we urge everyone to stand up for and actively promote child rights. This is especially crucial in relation to the rights of Indigenous children and youth who continue to be dramatically over-represented in both the child welfare and justice systems.

“Our children and youth are the future and we need to help pave the way for them by upholding their rights and empowering them to be change-makers,” says O’Soup.

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