

# Rights of Children and Youth in care:

*Connection to family and  
culture workshop*

**Workshop Manual**



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**equitas** educate. empower. change.

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### **Publication Development**

Christina Thiele

- *There are approximately 9,200 children in care in British Columbia.*
- *53.53% of children removed from their homes and placed in foster care have Aboriginal Status.*
- *Between 1995 – 2001 there was a 71.5% increase in the number of on-reserve children with status being placed in foster care.*
- *There are currently about 4,000 foster and group homes providing care to children and youth.*

**Foster care in British Columbia stats,**

Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents

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# Background

The Society for Children and Youth of BC and Equitas have collaborated to create this workshop on “Rights to Family and Connection to Culture” for IFCO’s 2011 Conference.

## Workshop Objectives

This workshop aims to inspire and guide more child and youth friendly practices thereby promoting resiliency, strength, courage, respect, self-esteem, community, connection, and a sense of purpose in the lives of children and youth in care.

The focus on the workshop will be connection to family and culture and child rights—child’s right to develop who they are (family, nationality, identity, family reunifications, adoption, culture, religion, and language); child’s right to participate.

## Funding

Funding for the coordination and materials of this workshop was provided by the Lex Reynolds Adoption and Permanency Trust.

The Lex Reynolds Adoption and Permanency Trust Fund is managed by the Victoria Foundation. The Victoria Foundation is Canada’s second oldest community foundation in Canada and the second largest in British Columbia.

Today, the Victoria Foundation has assets under management valued at approximately \$175 million. In 2009, the Foundation provided over 700 grants valued at \$9.2 million from endowment and provincial funds. We gratefully acknowledge their support.

[www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca](http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca)



# Organizations

## About the Society for Children and Youth of BC

The Society for Children and Youth of BC is a unique provincial non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to improving the well-being of children and youth.

For over 36 years, the Society has focused on providing a strong voice representing children and youth and advocating for their well-being in British Columbia. Using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a foundation, SCY has a track record of creating and delivering programs that have motivated change in legislation, policy, and practice in Canada.

Since Canada's ratification of the UNCRC, SCY has taken a leadership role in child rights promotion and the production of education materials and tools to facilitate and monitor compliance. SCY's ground breaking work on the "Four Star Rating System" that rates legal statutes 'through the eyes of a child and the lens of the UNCRC' has been applied to provincial legislature in BC, Alberta, and Ontario as well as federal legislation. In 2004, SCY developed Canada's first youth-led child rights monitoring process and in 2010 launched Canada's first multi-media Child Rights Public Awareness Campaign.

## About Equitas

Equitas was established as a non-profit, non-governmental organization in 1967 by a group of leading Canadian scholars, jurists and human rights advocates with a mandate to advance democracy, human development, peace and social justice through educational programs. Since then, Equitas has become a global leader in human rights education. Equitas' capacity-building programs in Canada and abroad have assisted civil society organizations and government institutions to participate effectively in human rights debates, to challenge discriminatory attitudes and practices and to advance important policy and legislative reforms to enhance human rights protection and fulfillment.

Equitas' human rights education programs focus on developing knowledge, strengthening skills and promoting action around the following themes: the creation and strengthening of independent national human rights institutions; training for NGO trainers; human rights education in the school system; human rights education with children and youth in non-formal settings; training in human rights advocacy and monitoring; the protection of particular groups in society, including women, migrant workers, children and minorities; and the promotion and protection of economic, social, and cultural rights.

# Introduction

There are about 9,200 children and youth living in government care in British Columbia and about 60,000 children and youth in care in Canada.

The experiences of each of these children living in care will be as diverse as the children themselves, yet we know that there are some prevailing similarities about how children and youth in care will connect with their family and culture.

We know that youth connect with their siblings more frequently than any other family member with whom they now have contact after ageing out of care. We know children and youth tend to identify their birth family as their primary object of attachment, despite the birth family being identified least often to whom the youth turn when they are sick or who they talk to about their feelings.

Research also tells us that youth who have lived in many foster homes do not feel part of any family.

The potential consequences of youth not feeling connected to their family and culture are damaging. They are more likely to be incarcerated, experience homelessness, have “behavioural difficulties”, and are more likely to engage in unhealthy relationships.

Foster parents are uniquely positioned to help young people in care build healthy relationships. The role of foster parents is to look after the best interests of the children and youth in their care and to uphold their rights—this desire to care and protect young people is the reason most foster parents choose to take on this role.

Thank you for joining us as we explore together how to effectively care for young people who are in government care, truly listen to the voices of children and youth, and uphold their right to connect to family and culture.

(Research from Jones and Kruk. “Life in Government Care: The Connection of Youth to Family”, 2005)

# Connecting to Culture

What is culture anyways? Culture encompasses a person's values and beliefs about the world. These values and beliefs can be hard to identify, because they are such a normal part of our lives: it makes up the lens through which we see the world.

Here are some questions to help you think about your own culture and the culture of others. Think about your community, your country, and yourself when you consider these questions.

- What is more important: rules or relationships?
- What do "rights" mean to you? Human rights? The rights of children and youth?
- Is it more important to be an individual or to be part of a group?
- Who is allowed to see how you are feeling? No one? Everyone?
- How much do you mix work life with your personal life? A lot? Not at all?
- Is it normal to do one thing at a time or many things at once?
- Do you try to control the world around you or do you let it control you?
- How do you think power and privilege should work? Is it OK to have more powerful and less powerful people?
- How do you relate to animals and nature?
- Are there specific ideas linked to a person's gender? For example, is it OK for women to be competitive and assertive? Or for men to be modest and caring?
- What are your traditions?
- What do you celebrate? What happens at your celebrations?
- How do you feel about being in a very uncertain or unfamiliar situation? Do you try to avoid uncertainty?
- Are you comfortable with people who have very different beliefs?
- How do you develop connections with other people?

Part of building a healthy community is to examine our own preconceptions about ourselves and be imaginative about other people's world views. How would other people respond to these questions? Respecting other people means asking each other these questions and having open conversations about what culture means to us.

As we consider respecting a child's right to connect with their family and culture it is helpful to first think about what culture means to you and what might be culturally important to the children in your life.



# Workshop Facilitators

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# Schedule

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Title</b>
Welcome	5 Minutes	The facilitator presents the objectives, methodology and the content of the workshop
Activity 1	25 Minutes	Introduction to Children’s Rights—the UNCRC and BC provincial legislation
Activity 2	30 Minutes	Exploring specific rights of children and youth in care—Connection to family and culture
Activity 3	30 Minutes	Next Steps, Planning for Action
<b>Total:</b>	1.5 Hours	



*“Research has demonstrated that when children and youth learn about their rights they show increased self-esteem. They are less likely to be harmed by others; more likely to engage with helpers; more respectful of the rights of others; more likely to accept diversity in others; more socially responsible and more likely to participate in a meaningful way in decisions affecting their lives.”*

**from *Your Life Your Rights*,**

**Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, MCFD**

# Activity 1

## Introduction to Children's Rights

### Objectives

To educate participants about the existence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Section 70 (BC provincial legislature on the rights of children and youth in care) and the spectrum of rights protected.

### Time

25 minutes

### Description

During this portion of the workshop, participants will take part in an activity based on Society of Children and Youth's child rights training. This workshop is divided into 2 parts.

### Remember:

- There are NO right or wrong answers. It is about having an open discussion and learning from each other.
- Participants can change their mind during the activity and move freely from one corner to another.

### Part A: What a child needs to be healthy and happy

- The facilitator draws a child on a flip chart and asks the group to call out things that a child needs to survive. These are written on the child.
- The facilitator then asks what a child needs to be happy. These are also written on the child.

### Part B: Mapping the UNCRC & Section 70

- The large group is broken into smaller groups. Each group receives a number of articles from the UNCRC & Section 70.
- Each group looks at their articles and thinks about how they relate to what has been written on the flip chart.
- Each group labels what is written on the flip chart with the relevant numbers of the articles
- The facilitator closes by noting how the UNCRC and Section 70 are not abstract but simple rights that the group has also determined are necessary for healthy and happy children.

# Activity 2

## Exploring Specific Rights of Children and Youth in Care

### Objectives

To engage participants in an activity to examine issues and situations that impact their lives on the theme of connection to family and culture.

### Time

30 min

### Description

During this portion of the workshop, participants will take part in an activity based on the Speaking Rights toolkit.

- The room is divided into four corners: Agree, Disagree, Neutral, and Don't Know.
- All participants in the workshop will be assigned a "character" that is different from their usual roles.
- The facilitator will read out statements that relate to the rights of children and youth in care to connect to their family and culture.
- As the statement is being read, the participants will have to decide which corner of the room best suits the way they feel about the statement (according to the role they are playing or their "character", and will go and stand in that corner.
- Participants can use the entire room, positioning themselves where they feel the space reflects their opinion (e.g. in between agree and neutral)
- After all of the participants have chosen a corner, the facilitator will debrief and discuss the statements and the decision the participants have made.
- It is important to discuss each statement with the group directly after participants have chosen their space in the room.

# Activity 3

## Next Steps, Planning for Action

### Objectives

To give participants an opportunity to create a SMART action plan related to their role in supporting youth in care and inspired by the workshop.

### Time

25 min

### Description

The group is divided into smaller groups. The groups are determined by putting together individuals that have the same role in supporting youth in care, for example one group could be foster parents. This workshop is divided into 2 parts.

#### Part A: SMART Brainstorming (15 minutes)

- The facilitator will distribute sheets to help guide the brainstorming session and action planning
- Each group will discuss what they learned during the workshop and what inspired them.
- Participants will narrow down their action ideas to 2 SMART goals.

#### Part B: Group Presentation (10 minutes)

- Each small group will make a short presentation of their SMART goals to the entire group.



# Reference Sheet 1

## UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

This is a simplified version of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has been signed by 191 countries. The convention has 54 articles in total. Articles 43 – 54 are about how governments and international organizations will work to support children's rights.

### Article 1

Everyone under 18 has all these rights.

### Article 2

You have the right to protection against discrimination. This means that nobody can treat you badly because of your colour, sex or religion, if you speak another language, have a disability, or are rich or poor.

### Article 3

All adults should always do what is best for you.

### Article 4

You have the right to have your rights made a reality by the government.

### Article 5

You have the right to be given guidance by your parents and family.

### Article 6

You have the right to life.

### Article 7

You have the right to have a name and a nationality.

### Article 8

You have the right to an identity.

### Article 9

You have the right to live with your parents, unless it is bad for you.

### Article 10

If you and your parents are living in separate countries, you have the right to get back together and live in the same place.

### Article 11

You should not be kidnapped.

### Article 12

You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.

### Article 13

You have the right to find out things and say what you think, through making art, speaking and writing, unless it breaks the rights of others.

### Article 14

You have the right to think what you like and be whatever religion you want to be, with your parents' guidance.

### Article 15

You have the right to be with friends and join or set up clubs, unless this breaks the rights of others.

### Article 16

You have the right to a private life. For instance, you can keep a diary that other people are not allowed to see.

### Article 17

You have the right to collect information from the media – radios, newspapers, television, etc – from all around the world. You should also be protected from information that could harm you.

### Article 18

You have the right to be brought up by your parents, if possible.

### Article 19

You have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated.

**Article 20**

You have the right to special protection and help if you can't live with your parents.

**Article 21**

You have the right to have the best care for you if you are adopted or fostered or living in care.

**Article 22**

You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee. A refugee is someone who has had to leave their country because it is not safe for them to live there.

**Article 23**

If you are disabled, either mentally or physically, you have the right to special care and education to help you develop and lead a full life.

**Article 24**

You have a right to the best health possible and to medical care and to information that will help you to stay well.

**Article 25**

You have the right to have your living arrangements checked regularly if you have to be looked after away from home.

**Article 26**

You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

**Article 27**

You have the right to a good enough standard of living. This means you should have food, clothes and a place to live.

**Article 28**

You have the right to education.

**Article 29**

You have the right to education which tries to develop your personality and abilities as much as possible and encourages you to respect other people's rights and values and to respect the environment.

**Article 30**

If you come from a minority group, because of your race, religion or language, you have the right to enjoy your own culture, practice your own religion, and use your own language.

**Article 31**

You have the right to play and relax by doing things like sports, music and drama.

**Article 32**

You have the right to protection from work that is bad for your health or education.

**Article 33**

You have the right to be protected from dangerous drugs.

**Article 34**

You have the right to be protected from sexual abuse.

**Article 35**

No one is allowed to kidnap you or sell you.

**Article 36**

You have the right to protection from of any other kind of exploitation.

**Article 37**

You have the right not to be punished in a cruel or hurtful way.

**Article 38**

You have a right to protection in times of war. If you are under 15, you should never have to be in an army or take part in a battle.

**Article 39**

You have the right to help if you have been hurt, neglected, or badly treated.

**Article 40**

You have the right to help in defending yourself if you are accused of breaking the law.

**Article 41**

You have the right to any rights in laws in your country or internationally that give you better rights than these.

**Article 42**

All adults and children should know about this convention. You have a right to learn about your rights and adults should learn about them too.



# Reference Sheet 2

## Section 70 Rights of Children and Youth in Care in British Columbia

1. To be fed, clothed, and nurtured according to community standards and to be given the same quality of care as other children in the placement;
2. To be informed about their plans of care;
3. To be consulted and to express their views, according to their abilities, about significant decision affecting them;
4. To reasonable privacy and to possession of their personal belongings;
5. To be free from corporal punishment;
6. To be informed of the standard of behaviour expected by their caregivers and of the consequences of not meeting their caregivers' expectations;
7. To receive medical and dental care when required;
8. To participate in social and recreational activities if available and appropriate and according to their abilities and interests;
9. To receive the religious instruction and to participate in the religious activities of their choice;
10. To receive guidance and encouragement to maintain their cultural heritage;
11. To be provided with an interpreter if language of disability is a barrier to consulting with them on decisions affecting their custody or care;
12. To privacy during discussions with members of their families, subject to subsection;
13. To privacy during discussions with a lawyer, the Child, Youth and Family Advocate, the Ombudsman, a member of Parliament;
14. To be informed about and to be assisted in contacting the Child, Youth and Family Advocate;
15. To be informed of their rights under this Act and the procedures available.

# Reference Sheet 3

## Roles and Statements

### Roles:

1. Young child in care
2. Youth in foster care
3. Youth in care living independently
4. Youth recently aged out of care
5. Resource worker (responsible for helping the foster family access resources that will support the child/youth)
6. Guardianship worker (responsible for the child/youth's plan of care)
7. Foster parent
8. Birth parent
9. Sibling/biological family member

### Statements:

1. When important decisions are made about the child/youth's life, my beliefs/values should be considered.
2. It is my responsibility to introduce the child/youth in care to beliefs from his/her culture.
3. It is my responsibility to ensure the child/youth has contact with his/her biological family (unless deemed otherwise by the courts).
4. It is OK to share my spiritual beliefs with the child/youth in foster care.
5. I should help the child/youth to develop a sense of family with the foster family.

# Reference Sheet 4

## Creating SMART Goals

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**ealistic  
**T**imely

### Specific

A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six “W” questions:

Who: Who is involved?

What: What do I want to accomplish?

Where: Identify a location.

When: Establish a time frame.

Which: Identify requirements.

Why: Specific reasons, purpose, or benefits

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, “Get in shape.” But a specific goal would say, “Join a health club and workout 3 days a week.”

### Measurable

Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set.

When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as ... How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

## Attainable

When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

## Realistic

To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be accomplished.

## Timely

A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. "Someday" won't work. But if you have a time frame, "by May 1st", then you will begin working on the goal.

## T can also stand for Tangible

A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.



# Reference Sheet 5

## Sorting our thoughts!

**DURING THIS WORKSHOP I LEARNED:**


**I WAS INSPIRED BY:**






# Reference Sheet 6

## Resources

### SOCIETY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF BC (SCY)

#### **Child Rights Public Awareness Campaign**

(Including links to organizations and resources dedicated to child rights)

[www.Everychild.ca](http://www.Everychild.ca)

To download or order SCY toolkits

[www.scyofbc.org/resources](http://www.scyofbc.org/resources)

### EQUITAS

#### **Play it Fair! Toolkit:**

<http://equitas.org/en/what-we-do/children-and-youth/play-it-fair-canada/toolkit-download>

### BC MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, FAMILY AND DEVELOPMENT

#### **Know Your Rights, a resource for youth in care**

[www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/know\\_your\\_rights.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/know_your_rights.pdf)

#### **This is Me and I have Rights, an activity book for children in care**

[www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/this\\_is\\_me.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/this_is_me.pdf)

#### **For youth in care in BC if they feel their rights are not being respected**

[www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/complaints/pdf/youth\\_complaints\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/complaints/pdf/youth_complaints_brochure.pdf)

### OTHER RESOURCES

#### **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, full text**

[www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm)

#### **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in child friendly language**

[www.scyofbc.org/uncrc-simplified-1](http://www.scyofbc.org/uncrc-simplified-1)

#### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, full text**

[www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/universal.asp](http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/universal.asp)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, plain language version

[www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plain.asp](http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plain.asp)

Information about the rights of young people in British Columbia

[www.fbcyicn.ca/files/rights-book/know-rights-online.pdf](http://www.fbcyicn.ca/files/rights-book/know-rights-online.pdf)

# Other SCY Publications

Aboriginal Child Friendly Communities Toolkit: Inclusion of the Early Years (2011)

Making Space for Children: Rethinking and Re-creating Children's Play Environments (1999, 2011)

Making Your Community More Child and Youth Friendly Toolkit: Getting Started and Planning for Action (2010)

Making Your Community More Child and Youth Friendly: Focusing on the Early Years (2010)

Realizing Rights—Responding to Needs: Discussion Paper (2005, 2010)

Realizing Rights—Responding to Needs: Community Consultation Report (2005, 2010)

Beyond Article 23—Rights of Children with Disabilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2004)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and Public Policy—Perspectives on the Rights of Children with Disabilities in British Columbia (2003)

Compliance of Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (2002)

Compliance of BC's Secure Care Act with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (2001)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child— 1. Guidelines for Policy Development; 2. A Model for Assessing Policy Compliance; 3. Supplement (2001)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—A Model for Assessing Legislative Compliance (2001)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—Does Domestic Legislation Measure Up? Research Review (1998)

To find out more, visit [www.scyofbc.org](http://www.scyofbc.org)



# Notes

A large rectangular box with rounded corners and a thick black border, containing 18 horizontal lines for writing notes. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the box, leaving a small margin from the right edge. The box is currently empty, ready for text input.

***“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want, and that they can grow up in peace.”***

**Kofi Annan**

Ghanaian diplomat, seventh

Secretary-General of the United Nations

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