

Zine & **HEARD**

Amplifying Voices of Youth in Care

**ISSUE #32
SEPTEMBER 2025**



We respectfully acknowledge that we reside on Treaty 6 Territory; traditional lands of many First Nations & Metis people & we are committed to learning the true history of Canada & the true meaning of truth & reconciliation.

WHO

Youth from care speaking out & making a difference.

WHAT

A zine to amplify our voices & raise awareness.

WHEN

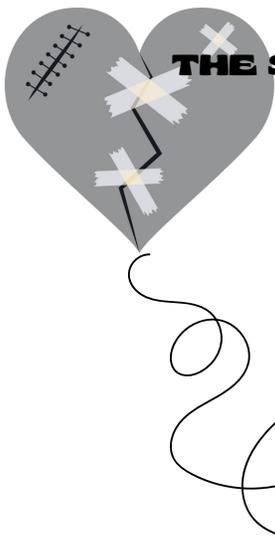
We publish around the 15th of every month.

WHERE

We are based in Edmonton but are for youth from care everywhere.

WHY

Because we can. Our voices have been silent for too long.



THE STRONGEST HEARTS HAVE THE MOST SCARS

*Thank you for
your support.*

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ASSISTANT EDITOR

KENNEDY HIGGANBOTHAM

COVER

ALLY SEIBAN

WHO'S INSIDE

A4YC CONFERENCE

INNER CITY HIGH

MADY SILVER

MARCUS MCKORT

WE OUT HERE

YOUTH IN CARE CHRONICLES

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

**SPECIAL THANKS TO
FORMER YOUTH IN CARE
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
FOR AWARDING OUR
CONTRIBUTORS
A LEADERSHIP AWARD.**

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August 12, 2025

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION



THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

Zine and Heard Contributors

In recognition of your outstanding leadership and commitment to people with lived experience in foster care.

KAELI ROSE SORT
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT OPERATOR

Dear Zine and Heard Contributors,

On behalf of the Former Youth in Care Community of Practice, it is a great honor to present the contributors to Zine & Heard with a Leadership Award in recognition of your outstanding creativity, collaboration, and service leadership. This year's theme, Standing Strong, honors those who remain grounded in their values while lifting others to be seen, heard, and celebrated. Your work exemplifies the power of collective leadership, showing that when we create together, we rise together.

Through Zine & Heard, you have cultivated a living community where stories breathe, connect, and transform. You honor narratives that carry truth and change, walking alongside other contributors with mentorship and encouragement that elevate voices and build confidence. Each issue provides a much-needed space where people with lived experience can share their art, poetry, music, and stories with honesty and courage. By uplifting these voices, you affirm that every story matters, every perspective carries wisdom, and every act of expression can dismantle stigma and weave connection.

Your leadership is grounded in inclusion, collaboration, and trust. You weave narratives into a collective tapestry, mentoring other contributors and ensuring their voices are heard and valued. This award celebrates your commitment to honoring the lived experiences of people in and from care, and the countless ways you shape narratives for a more just and compassionate future. Thank you for standing strong together and showing what is possible when creativity, courage, and community converge.

Thank you for amplifying countless voices, standing in solidarity with those who carry lived experience. You show that leadership is not defined by titles, but by creating space where every person matters, our shared humanity is honored, and stories are received with respect. Your work teaches us to listen, connect, and uplift one another. We are proud to recognize your contributions and celebrate the lasting impact Zine & Heard continues to make within the former youth in care community and beyond.

In solidarity and with deep admiration and gratitude,
Kaeli Rose Sort, Community Empowerment Operator
Former Youth in Care Community of Practice

The proof is in plain sight

September is the month dedicated to raise awareness of Truth & Reconciliation in Canada. Zine & HEARD endeavours to do that year round. Bringing you the stories of youth in care - many of whom are Indigenous - to bring a better understanding of the circumstances of growing up in the child welfare system. The statistics that plague these young individuals. The sorrow that surrounds their communities and families. The tragedy of intergenerational trauma that reaches back several generations. Like it or not, colonialism is the root of the ongoing reality for Indigenous children and youth from care. And those fearful individuals who attempt to deny the truth can try to distort it but they can't change it. The documentation is there. The church and government archives are real. Survivors have spoken. The proof is in plain sight.

The temptation to rewrite history for political purposes is irresistible for governments in some countries....These backlashes for the struggle for the right to truth, and, thereby, for evidence...are reminders that human rights, such as the right to know and the right to justice, are not given once and for all after they have been achieved but have to be defended...by every new generation.... [T]he principles and ideals of the right to history and the right to the truth are universal....The writing of history has always been a battlefield, but only archives can ensure that the historical debate can take place on an informed basis.

Sites of Truth, Sites of Conscience - Unmarked Burials and Mass Graves of Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children in Canada 2024

If you are looking for a good book to read about what you can do in your every day life to work towards Truth & Reconciliation there is a new hardcover by David A. Robertson called *52 Ways to Reconcile: How to Walk with Indigenous Peoples on the Path to Healing*. It's a really good read.

Some of the suggestions are pretty simple. Support an Indigenous musician. Support Indigenous tourism. Read Indigenous comics. Support Indigenous Humour (if you don't, trust me, you're missing out). Some of the suggestions are harder but reading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report is an important one. And, Wear an Orange Shirt on Orange Shirt Day. I say - wear it any day of the year. Truth & Reconciliation is 365 days of the year. Week #28 in the book suggests: Create, and Take, Your Own Action. Maybe start thinking about that one.

There are lots of events going this month. Take one in. Listen. Learn. Leave with a deeper appreciation for Indigenous community and a better understanding of the work that still needs to be done. Love is still the most powerful force on the planet. Use it.

With love,
Penny Frazier, Editor

Keep your stories, poetry, music,
culture and love rolling in.
We would love to hear from you.



Dead Kids Are Not Red Tape

BILL 38

has been passed in the Alberta Legislature.

The right of the Alberta government to dehumanize the lives of youth from care is now official.

All reporting of the serious injuries and deaths of youth from care aged 18-19 has been restricted and all reporting on 20-24 year olds has been eliminated under Bill 38.

Since 2021, 40 per cent of children and youth who died while receiving intervention services were in this age group.

This calloused and contemptuous legislation was designed to lower the official count of youth who have died in this government's care. A cold, cruel numbers game to hide their alarming track record from the public eye.

These deaths are now considered to be "Red Tape".



Their lives mattered.
Their lives were important.
They deserve to be counted.
They deserve to be remembered.
They deserve respect.

They do not deserve
to be treated like this.

~ Zine & HEARD ~



A High School That Believes In You.

We are a central Edmonton school that offers in-person accredited classes with extra supports to help 15-19 year old youths succeed.

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Visit our website to sign up for
a text or email reminder about
fall classes.

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for fall classes starting
August 27
at school.



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& Youth Engagement Program**

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WE OUT HERE

Please plan to attend our short doc and celebrate
the power of the young artists we are featuring
and the potential of all the youth out there.

NOVEMBER 1ST AT 1:00

STANLEY MILNER THEATRE

Free Admission!

Free Cookies & Fruit!

Free WE OUT HERE Zine!

West
Anthem

West
Anthem



Wordd

I am the most important person in my life
Not in a selfish way
In a survival way
In a “no one else can live this life for me”
way In a “I finally get it now” kind of way
Boundaries aren't mean, they're real
They're how I show myself I heal
They guard the peace I've worked to grow
They let the right things in,
and let the wrong things go
No
isn't rude or incomplete
It's not a battle or a retreat
It's clarity, it's calm, it's mine
It doesn't need to sound like a better line
I've carried stories that weren't my own
Believed I was broken when I'd just outgrown
Versions of me built on fear and control
But my past doesn't get to define my soul
I don't have to carry what's not mine
I won't apologize for drawing a line
It's not my job to hold it all
It's okay if some things fall
I am forgivable - fully, deep
Even for promises I couldn't keep
For times I shut down or pushed love away
I'm still worthy at the end of the day
I am capable - strong and true
Of starting again, of following through
Even when I've been unsure
There's a strength in me that will endure
I am deserving - of rest and grace
Of safe connection, of my own space.....



Of love that stays
and words that land
Of someone reaching
out their hand
I am learning -
and that's allowed
I don't have to always
make myself proud
I grow in silence,
I grow in pain
I grow each time I rise again
I am a fighter - not for praise
But for the chance
to change my ways
For the peace I earn
with every breath
For the life I choose
instead of death
So today I stand,
and I choose me
Not out of pride,
but finally free
Even when it's hard,
even when it hurts
I remember what
I'm truly worth
Because I am mine
- first

Mady Silver



Ally Sieben

We had the pleasure of interviewing Ally for the September zine and would like to truly thank her for her candid responses to our questions and for having the courage to share her story with us.



Tell us about your experience in care.

Before I answer this I would just like to state that I'm speaking on my own personal experience within the child welfare system in Alberta, my experience does not represent or reflect all former foster youth's experiences, or the experiences of children and youth who are currently residing in group homes and foster homes as we speak. There are many commonalities that many youth in care share, but each experience is personal and will differ on various levels.

I feel extremely grateful to have the opportunity to be able to speak about my experience as many other foster youth's voices and concerns go unheard. My experience in care was extremely privileged for the most part, I was apprehended from the NICU at the Royal Alexandra Hospital due to my mother's dependence on amphetamines and opioids, and concerns regarding her affiliation to gangs. I was six days old when I was taken into care, and received a foster placement in the community of Beaumont which is about 15 minutes south of Edmonton.

I resided in this home until the age of four, and in November of 2006 I was adopted! My adoptive mother continued to take in foster children and youth (primarily boys) until I was sixteen. Before and after my adoption my adoptive family made sure to keep my biological family involved, this included phone calls, visits with my birth mom, my biological brother, and my grandparents.

Throughout my time in care I had wonderful and adverse experiences with my foster siblings, in the grand scheme of things we were all children with complex feelings and experiences trying to grow and learn. Looking back at my experience I believe that I learned so much from my foster siblings, different cultures, different areas of the city, and various

effects of trauma on the developing child. My time in care and within a foster home really taught me the importance of connection, connection to peers, connection to culture, and the connection to community.

I feel extremely grateful to have the opportunity to be able to speak about my experience as many other foster youth's voices and concerns go unheard.

What was the best part?

The positive aspect of residing in care that stuck with me was staying in one placement. An unfortunate reality is that a majority of youth who have been involved in the child welfare system have experienced multiple foster care placements. Staying in one placement allowed me to build peer connections with the other kids at school and other community members. Staying in one foster home also allowed me to build relationships with my adoptive family. While in care and after I was adopted my immediate family members (in my adoptive family) always made me feel like I was meant to be there, my adoptive mother was always honest with me about my adoption.

In hindsight I think this had a positive effect on my development, I was able to find my sense of belonging and identity in a genuine and authentic way. I also loved hanging out with my foster siblings, when things were good I always had someone to do something with. Some of my fondest memories as a kid were going to catch minnows at the local pond and biking around town.

The connections I made with my foster siblings is something I'm still grateful for to this day. I'm still in contact with some of my siblings, it's nice to have someone you consider family that can relate to your experiences on a deeper level. Growing up within a foster home is an extremely niche experience, and I'm thankful for my amazing foster siblings that shaped my childhood in a positive way and provided me with so many joyful memories.

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What was hard?

An aspect of care that was challenging was feeling like I don't fit in completely with my family system. I know previously I mentioned that my immediate family members made me feel like a natural addition, but with my extended family it took time to feel like I belonged.

As a former foster youth I was hyper critical of my mistakes, anytime I acted out I felt like I was fitting into the stereotype of the "bad foster kid". As a kid and teenager I would often get into my own head about this specific stereotype, instead of recognizing that this feeling was something I would feel periodically and I would mistake it for my entire identity. Thankfully with time I was able to minimize those feelings, it helped being honest with certain members of my family about how I was feeling and how I thought they perceived me.

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Another aspect of care that was difficult to manage was losing connection with some of my foster siblings. It's common within the child welfare system for kids to move from foster home to foster home, as a kid you don't understand the rationale of the caseworker or the complexities of choosing a placement for a youth. Sometimes when my siblings got removed from our house it felt extremely abrupt, it was hard to have someone you considered family be removed from your life with no explanation. As an adult I can understand the reasons and process of a placement breakdown, but as a kid I had a hard time dealing with it. I remember after two of my foster siblings got removed I would ask my adoptive mother to hang a sign on our front door explaining that we were out for the day in case they decided to come back, unfortunately at the time I wasn't able to grasp or process the concept that they had been moved to a different home.

Tell us about your post secondary journey.

If you ask anybody who knew me throughout grade school they would definitely say I didn't take school seriously, and they were right. Through grades 7-12 I never found fulfillment in academic validation, I think this was the result in my lack of effort in my studies. From a young age I always knew that I wanted to be in some sort of helping field, but I knew my grades weren't good enough to enroll in university. A year after I graduated I wanted to challenge myself and apply to upgrade some of my high school courses through the local outreach centre. My goal was to get into MacEwan's social work program, or the child and youth care program. It took me a year to upgrade my courses but I did it! I remember how happy I was that I had been accepted into the child and youth care program. I had previous bosses and some friends who talked about how amazing the professors were and how supportive they are of their students. I was so nervous to go to university. I felt insecure being 21 in my first year of university but I was very fortunate and thankful for my school peers and professors for making my time at university meaningful and accepting. Once I started classes it affirmed to me that this career path was right for me, I honestly can't picture myself doing anything else.

Throughout my teenage years when I would think about what my career path would be, social work and youth work were the only two fields I felt I could relate to. My personal connection to these two fields made me feel competent that I could be successful working in these types of environments.

Throughout my teenage years when I would think about what my career path would be, social work and youth work were the only two fields I felt I could relate to. My personal connection to these two fields made me feel competent that I could be successful working in these types of environments. Seeing the effects of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse in my foster siblings motivated me to become a safe adult for children residing in care. When I was 19 I got hired as a youth worker at the Chantal Berube Youth Centre. Building connections with the youth in my own community also reaffirmed the fact that this field was fulfilling and motivating for me. Seeing any amount of positive progression in youth (big or small) felt like winning the lottery. It is an absolute privilege to witness proactive change in my community and the youth I work with.

What are some of your goals as a Child & Youth Care Worker?

As of now I have an interest in preventative work. This basically means supporting children, youth and parents to prevent children and youth from being apprehended by children's services.

Residing in the system is not a normative experience for any child and I would love to be a part of the preventative aspect of the field. In most cases that I've seen so far kids don't want to leave home, they just want home to change.

This may seem extremely simple, but I love getting to know the youth I work with. As an adult I often forget how creative and imaginative kids can be. I enjoy hearing their stories, I enjoy playing their games, and I enjoy getting to know them at a personal level. In my opinion having a relationship with the youth you work with makes the job even more enjoyable and meaningful. Knowing the youth gives you even more motivation to do the most you can for them. By the nature of the job one should already be doing everything in their power to provide the most for the youth, but having a relationship with the kid makes it even more personal. Relationships help buffer stress and provide emotional safety. If I'm going to be involved in a child's life for any amount of time I want them to know that I want to be there and I care about their interests and wellbeing.



Young Ally & Friend

Did you have any mentors that stand out for you?

When I think of mentors that helped shape my formative years in a positive way I think of my first boss. I got hired at a local donair shop in the 9th grade, and to be completely honest I wasn't the best at the job when I started. Even if I wasn't the best worker when I started she was always there to guide me, and give me positive reinforcement when I needed it.

Another thing that always was impactful for me was her kindness, every customer was greeted with a smile, she would remember everyone's names and ask about how they're doing. I saw how these interactions influenced the space of the restaurant, it made it feel cozy and welcoming. As an employee she was always able to maintain the line between expectations of the job and being emotionally supportive of her staff.

I always viewed her as a safe person to talk to and I still do. She definitely influenced my personal and professional life in the aspect of relationship building, she taught me that being kind is a vital aspect to build relationships that last. I've always admired how she was able to build her business from the ground up through hard work, she's always been a positive influence in my life and she will always be. I love you Maina!

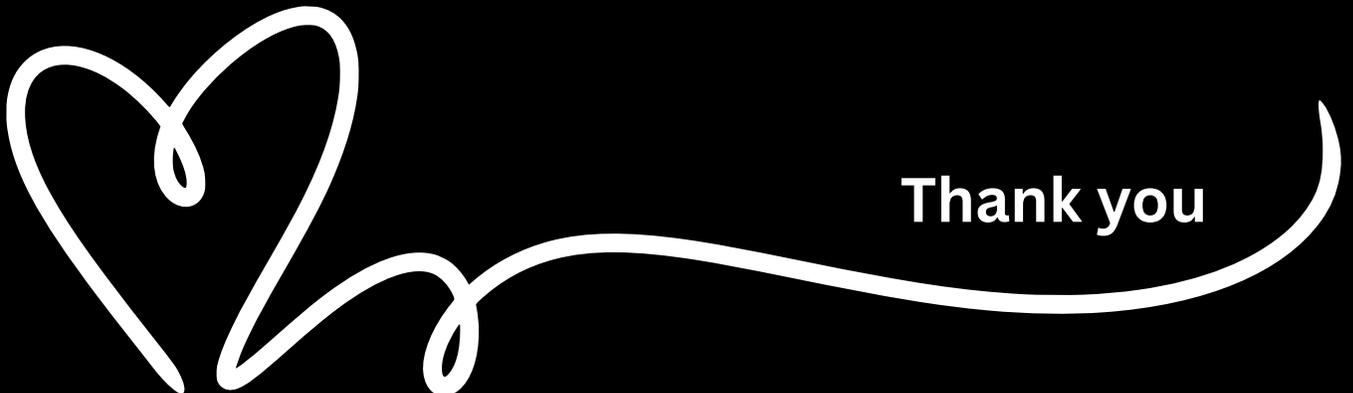
**ARE YOU A YOUTH FROM CARE?
DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?
ART, MUSIC OR CULTURE TO SHARE?**

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Please contact us at

editor@zineandheard.ca

@zine_and_heard on Instagram



Thank you

It makes me extremely happy that I feel secure in my sense of self, as a preteen it was exhausting navigating the world in such an anxious way. Sometimes it was hard to recognize the positive aspects of myself but I've gotten better at it as I've gotten older.

10 years ago did you think you would be where you are now?

Not at all, when I was 13, I was terrified to grow up. I enjoyed the simplicity of being a kid and not having major responsibilities. At the age of 13, I was mostly concerned with my Minecraft world and other trivial things. As a child I think the fear of failure and embarrassment really held me back when thinking about my future.

This fear wasn't instilled in me from other people, I think it had always been a deep insecurity of mine. It makes me extremely happy that I feel secure in my sense of self, as a preteen it was exhausting navigating the world in such an anxious way. Sometimes it was hard to recognize the positive aspects of myself but I've gotten better at it as I've gotten older.

If you could go back in time what would you tell your six year old self?

It may sound harsh but I would tell my six year old self to be okay with doing hard things. If I knew this when I was younger I feel like I would have more confidence in applying myself in school, and taking up new hobbies. Sometimes the hardest things can be the most fulfilling and rewarding.

What are your other interests and hobbies?

As a kid I was always fascinated by insects. My foster siblings and I would always have so much fun catching and attempting to keep grasshoppers and spiders as pets. Growing up I would always watch insect videos in my free time. I always found it extremely interesting.

Recently some of the youth I work with in group care (youth residing in group homes) have taken an interest in bug catching. Some days I spend hours with them in the fields catching butterflies, sometimes before work I google random bug facts to tell them when we're out. It's sweet to see kids be kids. It's a shared interest between me and them and it feels like I can relate to them even though I'm older and at a different stage in my life.

What would you tell kids in care now?

Know your rights. If you ever feel like you're being mistreated in a placement you have a right to speak to a youth advocate in private for support and guidance. Your physical and emotional wellbeing should be prioritized ALWAYS.

It can be hard to accept yourself unconditionally, but you're not a burden, you have a right to exist. As a kid you'll have so many experiences that may seem challenging or hard to understand but you need to give yourself grace, nobody's perfect. There is always room for growth and change. As people we don't stay the same forever, it's okay to outgrow friends and interests, sometimes it can help us develop our genuine sense of self.

The most important thing I want youth in care to know is how resilient and strong they are. Dealing with big emotions at any stage in development is challenging, but with every challenge you overcome you contribute to your own strengths and identity. You deserve to be loved, seen, and heard.



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You deserve to be loved, seen, and heard.**



Ally

SAVE THE DATES!



A
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Y
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C
A

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Dr. Melanie Doucet

Dr. Doucet has been working to improve the lives of youth in care for over 15 years, starting in her home province of New Brunswick, and now based in Montreal, Quebec. She is a former youth in care, holds a PhD in Social Work, and is a member of the Centre for Research on Children and Families (CRCF). Her doctoral research, titled Relationships Matter for Youth 'Aging Out' of Care, provided a platform for youth from care to develop child welfare research, policy and practice recommendations based on their lived experience expertise. As part of the project, she mounted a successful photo exhibit, which drew the attention of government policy makers and community based organizations.

In collaboration with her co-researchers, she compiled an [extensive report](#), which was released in 2018 through the BC Representative for Children and Youth and received national attention. Her efforts have also received high-level acclaim including SSHRC and Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Doctorial scholarships and awards. Dr. Doucet's research aims to provide a platform for the voice of youth from care in proposing specific recommendations relevant to child welfare policies, programs and intervention strategies targeted to young people in care transitioning to adulthood.



Michael Ungar, Ph.D.

Michael Ungar, Ph.D. is the founder and Director of the [Resilience Research Centre](#) at Dalhousie University where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Child, Family and Community Resilience. In 2022, Dr. Ungar was ranked the number one Social Work scholar in the world in recognition of his ground-breaking work as a family therapist and resilience researcher. That work has influenced the way human development and organizational processes are understood and studied globally, with much of Dr. Ungar's clinical work and scholarship focused on the resilience of marginalized children and families, and adult populations experiencing mental health challenges at home and in the workplace.

Dr. Ungar's work emphasizes how to use the theory of resilience to increase both individual and institutional agility during crises, with numerous organizations having adopted his concept of resilience as a negotiated process that enhances wellbeing and social responsibility. He is the author of over 250 peer reviewed articles and book chapters and 17 books. His blog, Nurturing Resilience, can be read on Psychology Today's website.

A4YC CONFERENCE



Mrs. Sheldon

Mrs. Sheldon Cree name (pihphichow) is a Registered Psychologist from Swan River First Nation with extensive experience in both clinical practice and academia. She has a background in Indigenous Psychology and LifeSpan Development, having taught these subjects at University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills. In 2021, Mrs. Sheldon founded Indigenous Psychological Services (IPS), an organization that now boasts a team of 33 practitioners across offices in Edmonton, Calgary, and Enoch Cree Nation. With a career in the mental health field that began in 2003, Mrs. Sheldon has worked extensively in northern communities, supporting healthy choices for Indigenous families. Her experience includes six years as a clinical supervisor at Night Wind Treatment Center in Edmonton, where she played a pivotal role in creating a treatment program that incorporates the Wheel for Change, a model honoring Indigenous cultural practices. She was also a clinical lead in The Edmonton Drug Court Treatment Center in 2014.

Mrs. Sheldon is a complex trauma specialist with certifications in several therapeutic modalities, including Somatic Attachment Practitioner, Somatic Experiencing Practitioner, and EMDR. She is also trained in Polyvagal Theory and Indigenous Focused Oriented Therapy.

**Please read more about the Keynote Speakers at the
A4YC Conference at a4yc.ca**

A4YC BREAKOUT SESSION

Amplifying Voices of Youth from Care

Speakers: Penny Frazier & Kennedy Higganbotham

Organization: Zine & HEARD

**Youth from care have powerful stories to tell—are we listening?
Discover how zines (DIY magazines) help young people express
themselves, share their experiences, and heal. This session explores
how art, music, and writing can be transformative tools for
self-discovery and advocacy.**

Marcus McKort: A Bit of My Story in Care



Mental health is a serious issue and when you come into care you shouldn't leave worse than how you came in. Our mental health shouldn't be compounded by poor treatment. We suffer enough just moving from worker to worker and to place to place to place.

When I first came into care, I was about 6 months old. I think I came in permanently when I was around the age of 3. I went to an agency where I remember sleeping on a little wooden platform with a foam pad for a mattress. I also remember getting soap put in my mouth on a regular basis because I was an angry little kid and must have sworn a lot. I actually endured a lot of physical abuse at that place. I'd be hit. I'd be spanked. One time I remember standing outside washing my pissy clothes in a bucket. It was winter and I don't remember having any clothes on. I would stand there hugging myself to try to keep warm. I remember telling workers about the abuse but nothing was ever done. To say the least, it was not a good experience with that agency. I became even angrier.

When I was around 6 years old, I was admitted to a psychiatric ward in an Edmonton hospital and stayed there for a year or so. I was malnourished and very skinny and I guess you could say I had an eating disorder. I was put on some kind of medications. Eventually I moved from there to a therapeutic treatment program with another agency. There was a lot of other angry kids there aged 6 to 13. That was not a good experience, either. I'd be forced to eat dairy products and I am lactose intolerant. I would be locked in a room for two hours a day for "quiet time". It was a tiny room, almost like a jail cell. The beds were glued to the floor. We would sit down every day in group therapy circle and tell everyone what we're feeling like but it wasn't helpful.

I was unsuccessful in a number of foster homes and other placements over the next several years until I ended up in a group home that was really good. I still had anger issues. I was diagnosed with a lot of problems by that time and that's when I started self harming (cutting) and smoking pot. I was probably 12 years and I had a lot of problems that turned into the reality of having a harsh life. I got charged with the youth justice system at the age of 13. I was sent to another residential setting and was in the secure unit. I was very aggressive and had no respect for women as I had been abused by so many. So, I would be especially aggressive towards female staff. It was very bad.

While I was there I joined a baseball team. I had never played baseball in my life but the coach gave me a chance to be the catcher and I was really good at it. She said I gave it 100% all the time. I really enjoyed that experience but soon I was back in the hospital as I had been so many times before. I went back to that placement when I was released. Still angry, still cutting, and smoking weed if I had the chance. I went to high school but I barely went to class. My grades were in the 40s. I was always losing privileges there and wouldn't be allowed to play any sports or do any rec. I ran away from that place around the age of 15, became homeless, and became a full blown drug addict. Being homeless is something I don't wish on anyone. I was involved in dealing and was gang affiliated. I got arrested and charged and was back in the youth justice system again by age 16. I was transferred to the hospital again and was put in a forensics unit for quite some time. It was a very bad place to be. There was so much noise from other patients kicking and screaming and banging things around. I was tormented in that unit but I also thought I was Mr. Hot Shot like most boys at that age.

Eventually I got released and was placed in another group home. I was doing drugs and I was getting into a lot of fights. I eventually had to move again to another group home. It was all girls so I got my own room and my own bathroom so that was pretty cool. I also started attending a really great outreach school and got into making music. I learned how to play the guitar. I learned how to make beats. I started getting 80s in everything. I had the best teacher. I just remember his name was Brian and he was really nice. He would joke around with me all the time. They really did good work with troubled kids. There should be more places like that for us to learn. We don't do well in the regular system. I had years where I changed schools 5 or 6 times but that's the school I finally graduated from. They threw a little dinner party for me and I felt really special. It was really, really well done, like, really... It was really authentic, They really gave a damn about me. Even though it wasn't a real graduation, it was something. I think it was even better. It made me happy.

I ran away from that place around the age of 15, became homeless, and became a full blown drug addict. Being homeless is something I don't wish on anyone.

As for placements and moves....I think I have had around 50 or 60 from the age of 3 to age 22. That includes placements in hospitals, detentions centers, residential treatment settings, foster homes, group homes and independent living arrangements.

As for placements and moves....I think I have had around 50 or 60 from the age of 3 to age 22. That includes placements in hospitals, detentions centers, residential treatment settings, foster homes, group homes and independent living arrangements. As for workers - I have probably had 20 or more. It's hard to say because sometimes you might not even get to meet them and they are gone. I did have two that really stood out because they stuck up for me and they got my records from the hospital so I could understand my medical conditions better from when I was born and my history of seizures. I also had a couple of real bad ones. One male in particular that I don't even want to talk about. I have tried to live independently many times. I am on my own right now in an apartment and I have a good landlord so it's one of the best places I have lived. The landlord actually cares and it's not in a bad neighbourhood for once.

Some things that could have made a difference for me growing up is if there was more therapy and more staffing. Like staff that did more activities and actually took us out to do more things. If the staff actually engaged with us more. If staff would have been better trained and were better at deescalating situations. They needed to spend less time hiding in the office and spend more time with the kids. I would also say we need proper support with proper people that don't abuse us and abuse their power. In my case, they needed to investigate the homes I was in more thoroughly and weed out some of the dangerous and dysfunctional people working with vulnerable kids.

The government needs to put more funding into activities for us. Like up the rec fund and make sure it is being spent on us. For me I would have liked a chance to play on a proper hockey team and be able to finish a year. Like actually be part of something. Being in sports or music or whatever kind of recreation you like, can keep you away from drugs and gangs and other negative influences.

My best memories from care were when I got to play rec league hockey and baseball.

We also need to be supported until we are older and transitioning out of care. When they lowered the age of financial support to 22 a lot of us got screwed over and many of us fell through the cracks because we thought we had support til age 24 and then all of a sudden it was like - nope - bye bye. Just to save money. Because money is more important than our lives, I guess. I am very frustrated with this government and now they are taking money away from our AISH benefits that could help us a lot. What they are doing is mean.

My life in care really did contribute to all the crap I went through and am still going through, honestly. Especially, you know, I'm thinking about my mental health. There was virtually no therapy. There was basically nothing. And some of the staff terrorized me. They were straight up bullies. That's the truth. I have to wonder if some of them were even background checked. Mental health is a serious issue and when you come into care you shouldn't leave worse than how you came in. Our mental health shouldn't be compounded by poor treatment. We suffer enough just moving from place to place to place.

More people need to listen to us. Because if you voice your concerns and you feel like nobody's listening, you don't really feel like voicing them anymore. You know? You're like, well, what's the point, right? I felt helpless and alone most of the time. You don't know what to do. You don't know where to go. You have no one. I have attempted suicide many, many times.

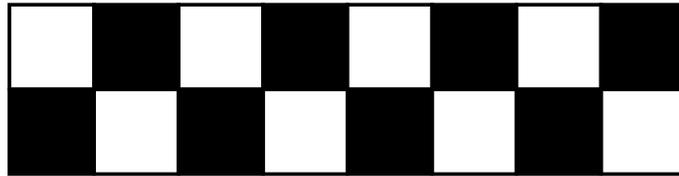
But, I'm still here, still fighting my demons with all I got and I'm still going to try my best to get better and make my life better.

I appreciate you reading my story and I hope the best for whatever you might be going through.



Marcus

My tattoo represents where I've been and what I am up against on a daily.



DIAL 9-8-8 SUICIDE CRISIS LINE 24/7

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS CRISIS LINE

24- HOUR 1-866-925-4419

YOUTH EMERGENCY SHELTER (Y.E.S.S.)

780-468-7070 24/7 24 HOURS

ACCESS 24/7 - 24 HOUR

Crisis and Intake Services - 780-424-2424

KIDS HELP PHONE - 24 HOUR

Call 1-800-668-6868 Facebook Messenger

Text CONNECT to 686868

NACIS CRISIS LINE - 24 HOUR

780-422-2001

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICES

1-888-456-4566 24 HOUR

CMHA DISTRESS LINE - 24 HOUR

780-482-4357 (HELP)

KICKSTAND CONNECT

mykickstand.ca/online-care#resources

OFFICE OF THE YOUTH & CHILD ADVOCATE

**If you have questions about your rights as a young person,
need legal help, or need to speak out, we're here for you.**

Talk to Us: Toll-free: (800) 661-3446

Monday - Friday 8:15 AM - 4:30 PM

NORTHERN ALBERTA Call: (780) 422-6056

SOUTHERN ALBERTA Call: (403) 297-8435

ACCESS OPEN MINDS

**ACCESS Open Minds Edmonton is a walk-in service for individuals
16-25 years old. Young people and their families can walk-in during
open clinic hours and will be seen on a first come first serve basis.**

MONDAY – FRIDAY 12:00-5:00PM 780-887-9781

NEED TO CONNECT? DIAL 211 24 HOURS

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The book that inspired Zine & HEARD is a must read for anyone working with youth in and from care.



18 former youth in care from Alberta tell their stories in
YOUTH IN CARE CHRONICLES:
Reflections on Growing Up in the
Child Welfare System

Available at
[Amazon](https://www.amazon.com)
&
[Audreys](https://www.audreys.com)

All proceeds go to fund projects for youth in care.

NATANIS MERASTY



Missing from: Edmonton/Leduc area, Alberta, Canada, May 5, 2025

Age: 24 Gender: Female.

Ethnicity: Aboriginal / Indigenous

Eyes: Brown Hair: Brown, medium-length

Height: 5'9" Weight: 170 lbs

Last seen wearing: Black pants, a black and grey long-sleeved shirt, and white shoes. She has multiple tattoos including a cross on her forearm, a flower on the top of her right hand, and letters on her fingers.

Last seen at: Continental Inn at 166 Street and Stony Plain Road, Edmonton, Alberta. CCTV footage showed her leaving with two females at 1:22 a.m. on May 5, 2025. Her vehicle (a black 2007 Hyundai Tucson with Saskatchewan license plate) was later found abandoned and repainted in Saskatchewan.

Natanis was reported missing on May 9, 2025. Her last contact with loved ones was on May 5. Since then, the vehicle she was driving was tracked across multiple locations including Sherwood Park, Buck Lake, Nanaimo (via ferry), and Lloydminster, before being found abandoned at James Smith Cree Nation on May 15.

She may be in Calgary, Leduc (AB), or Revelstoke (BC), but her current whereabouts are unknown. This behavior is unlike her and there are serious concerns for her safety.

If you have any information regarding Natanis Merasty's whereabouts, please do not hesitate to contact: Edmonton Police Service - Missing Persons at 780-423-4567 or #377 from a mobile phone. Or contact your local police to provide information.

Anonymous tips: 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) or online at www.p3tips.com/250

DENZEL LOUIS-SMALLBOY



Last seen: July 14, 2025 in Red Deer

Red Deer, Alta. – Red Deer RCMP are seeking the public's assistance in locating missing 16-year-old Denzel Louis-Smallboy. He was last seen on July 14, 2025 in Red Deer. There is concern for his well-being. Denzel is described as:

6 feet 2 inches and approximately 155 pounds.

Black hair and brown eyes. Medium complexion.

Last seen wearing a black hoodie, black skinny jeans, Black shoes, and a black toque

If you have any information regarding the whereabouts of Denzel, please contact Red Deer RCMP at 403-406-2200. If you wish to remain anonymous, you can contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS), online at www.P3Tips.com

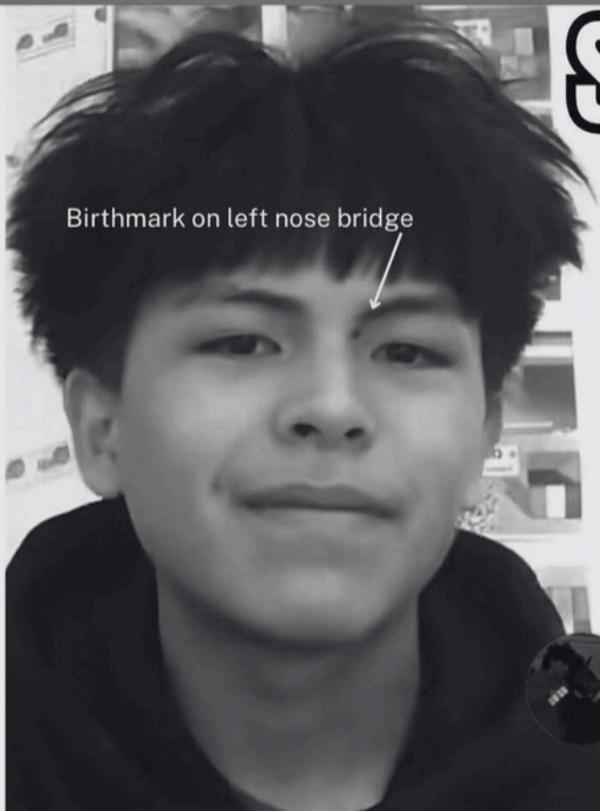


*You
are
not
forgotten.*

A very high percentage of missing & murdered Indigenous women & girls, men & boys & Two-Spirit persons spent time in the child welfare system.

MISSING 14-YR OLD

LAST SEEN LEAVING A FRIENDS HOUSE IN CANORA
NEIGHBOURHOOD (WEST), EDMONTON, ALBERTA
ON JUNE 1, 2025



SAMUEL BIRD

HAIR: BROWN
EYES: BROWN
HEIGHT: 5' 8"
WEIGHT: SLIM BUILD



▲ CASE DETAILS ▲

SAMUEL BIRD, A CREE YOUTH, HAS BEEN MISSING SINCE JUNE 1, 2025. HIS DISAPPEARANCE IS UNUSUAL AND DEEPLY CONCERNING. HIS FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ARE DESPERATE TO BRING HIM HOME.

📍 SPECIAL REQUEST: IF YOU LIVE ALONG THE NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER, PLEASE WATCH THE SHORELINES AND DOWNSTREAM AREAS FOR ANY SIGNS OF SAMUEL.

📌 HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- SHARE THIS POSTER NATIONWIDE AND INTERNATIONALLY
- CHECK AREAS ALONG THE NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER
- REPORT ANY INFORMATION IMMEDIATELY

IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING REGARDING SAMUELS DISAPPEARANCE
CALL THE EDMONTON CITY POLICE
EPS FILE # 250466067

780-423-4567

At the time of publication, search and rescue efforts continue for Samuel Bird. If you can help in any way, please reach out.

PLEASE FOLLOW

Bring Samuel Bird Home on FB