



Ministry of Children and  
Family Development



# **RIGHTS 2 SUCCESS**

**PROJECT SUMMARY: A COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL  
OF RIGHTS EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN  
CARE AND AT RISK AND THE ADULTS WHO WORK  
WITH THEM**

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- International Institute on Child Rights and Development
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## Executive Summary

### Background

Rights 2 Success (R2S) is a project sponsored by the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN), the Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia (CYO), and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The project supports the legislated mandate to educate<sup>1</sup> children and youth in care and at risk<sup>2</sup> by those serving children and youth within the child welfare system and advances the rights of children and youth as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child and Family Community Services Act (British Columbia).<sup>3</sup>

R2S is based on a former rights education program called Right Way. Right Way was developed by Save the Children Canada and based on research by the Office of Child and Family Services Advocacy in Ontario which found that children and youth in care had limited knowledge of their rights, how rights work and how to responsibly advocate for themselves. R2S takes the basic rights education model of Right Way further to help communities promote and create a culture of children's rights by engaging the entire community including youth, parents, caregivers, guardians, service providers, and advocates.<sup>4</sup> It seeks to empower young people to assert their rights through participation in decision-making and advocating on their own behalf if their rights are not respected. It also involves acknowledging what a community is already doing to support and promote children's rights and builds on those strengths using a common language and vision.

### What is Rights 2 Success and how is it delivered?

R2S consists of two youth-facilitated workshops. An interactive youth workshop brings young people in care and "at risk" together in a safe environment in their community where they explore the world of rights, participation and advocacy and learn practical skills that will assist them in having their rights fulfilled through participation in decision-making. The adult workshop provides service providers, parents, caregivers, advocates, guardians and citizens with an increased understanding of children's rights and the importance of rights education, explores the prevalent myths about children's rights, and identifies the adults' role in actualizing children's rights. Both workshops use an approach which is supportive of children's development, participation in their family and community, and facilitates respect for, and understanding of, the rights of others.

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<sup>1</sup> Educate: to educate is more than just providing information, it also includes a process of teaching until a child or youth understands the information fully.

<sup>2</sup> **At risk children and youth:** this term refers to those children and youth who are in high risk circumstances and are often known to Ministry of Children and Family Development and accessing services from the system.

<sup>3</sup> The UNCRC defines anyone under the age of 18 as a 'child'; however, R2S distinguishes children (0-12) from youth (13-18) and uses 'young people' to refer to all children and youth (0-18). In R2S, "Youth Facilitators" is defined as someone under the age of 29.

<sup>4</sup> IICRD,

## **The Provincial Piloting of Rights 2 Success**

Under the guidance of a Steering Committee and direct work of a project team, the workshops were developed, piloted and evaluated during the period of May 2005 through January 30, 2006. In June 2005, presentations were made to the Regional Executive Directors and Directors of Child Welfare from the five MCFD regions and to the members of the Federation of Child and Family Services to gain their support, input and commitment in bringing R2S to communities in B.C. A commitment was made to deliver the workshop in two communities per region in addition to one rural and one urban aboriginal community and one youth custody centre. Representatives from regional MCFD staff and community agencies were identified (volunteered and recruited) to work with the project team. Pilot workshops were completed in eight of the thirteen identified communities. These were: Quesnel, Vancouver, Powell River, Dawson Creek, Abbotsford, Kelowna, Cranbrook and the 'Tri-Cities' (Port Moody, Coquitlam & Port Coquitlam). Workshops were not implemented in the following sites: Courtenay, Victoria, Nezul Be Hunuyeh Child & Family Services (Ft. St. James – Rural Aboriginal agency); Surrounded by Cedars (Victoria – Urban Aboriginal Agency), and the Victoria Youth Custody Services.

The workshop was delivered to approximately 65 youth: 60 percent identified themselves as in care and 23 percent on youth agreements.<sup>5</sup> Twenty six percent of youth identified themselves as aboriginal. The average age of youth attending the workshop was sixteen, but the workshop was delivered to youth between eleven and nineteen.

The workshop was delivered to approximately 138 adults. This included a cross-section of MCFD staff, community service providers and caregivers.

### **Evaluation**

The project evaluation framework included four categories that combined both the overall project process evaluation and the pilot evaluation. These included: output (number and profile of participants), formative (workshop content), impact (effect of workshop) and process (overall project and setting up of the pilots).

Bringing R2S to a community involved a significant amount of preparation and organization. Central to the success was the partnership between the R2S project team, local MCFD staff and community agencies. Roles and responsibilities were outlined in a partnership agreement with the project team providing concrete support in the planning process. Other key pieces included: ensuring that the community partners fully understood the goals and objectives of R2S, that they were engaged and interested in using R2S as a tool to fulfill their mandate, continuous dialogue about the principles of youth engagement and creatively exploring and supporting efforts to 'recruit' adults and youth to attend the workshops. The 'recruitment' of adult and youth participants was particularly challenging in some pilot sites. This appeared to be related to community partners' not fully understanding and articulating the purpose of the workshop

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<sup>5</sup> Fifty three youth submitted evaluation information.

and an underestimation of the effort and strategies necessary to attract youth participants. Another key component was creating a balance that allowed for community partners to adapt the process in a way that worked well for their community while at the same time holding true to the goals and objectives of R2S. Pilots were most successful in the communities where the agencies volunteered to host a pilot and where local MCFD offices and community agencies had a successful history of working together.

Clearly identified in the evaluation was the need for more extensive work to be done to ensure that the workshop(s) meet the needs of the aboriginal and ethno-cultural community. Both the adult and youth workshop must be adapted to reflect the context within which they are being presented (aboriginal, ethno-cultural, youth custody, and so forth).

Overall, adult participants were highly receptive to the workshop at all pilot sites. Adult participants valued the facilitation and participatory style of the workshop and the resource packages. The complexity and potential controversy of the subject matter and the number of key messages significantly impacted the ability of the facilitators to present all the material. Adult participants also had varied knowledge about the subject matter. Consideration must be given to redesigning the adult workshop in terms of content and possibly co-facilitated by an adult who is knowledgeable about the subject matter and a youth facilitator rather than the current model of two youth facilitators.

Youth participants rated the workshop highly and identified the facilitators as “cool” and “rocking.” They reported that their ideas were listened to, that they learned something about rights, participation and advocacy and they knew where to go for help. The youth workshop relied heavily on the skill of the facilitators to move through dense material on rights, participation and advocacy using participatory activities. The workshop goals and key messages were very ambitious and although the workshop was received well, a strategy to streamline the material must be implemented in order to keep the young people fully engaged.

### **Next Steps**

The Evaluation Report provides an in-depth analysis of the piloting process and identifies the strengths and the challenges. The accompanying recommendations provide a comprehensive framework that outlines how to overcome the challenges and supports the continuance of this very important initiative on behalf of children in care and at risk in this province. The project partners are recommending that an implementation plan for the future delivery of R2S in British Columbia be established. . This decision is based upon completion of the R2S piloting process, the evaluation and the approval of the R2S Steering Committee.

An implementation plan for the future delivery of R2S should be developed with the goal of establishing community-based delivery of rights education workshops. It had been suggested that upon completion of the piloting process, the next step

would be to move to community sustainability of the workshops. The complexities associated with this project indicate that it would be premature to proceed in this direction and that R2S should be held centrally for a period of time to address the issues arising from the evaluation and develop an implementation plan that incorporates the learning and engages communities in the process of implementing R2S at the local level.

The resources and skill set required to adequately support a R2S workshop initiative the way it is currently structured is substantial. For R2S to be successful, it needs to be part of an overall strategy to promote and fulfill children's rights including rights education, community mobilization, monitoring and reporting, and policy development. For child rights education to have an impact, the local community must be mobilized to take on this task themselves. R2S must:

- include a component that reports back to the partners to measure outcomes/impact,
- occur in close collaboration with community partners and local child rights champions,
- link with other child rights initiatives in BC and strategize and coordinate activities accordingly, and
- provide tools to the community to directly support their own child rights education (which must include partnering with children and youth to identify community strengths and build on them).

The Implementation Phase will need to be managed as a project in and of itself and will require dedicated resources to support this. Initially, the CYO was prepared to recruit and hire a young person with the specific skills and abilities required to assume the role of R2S Project Coordinator. This position would be responsible for further refinement of the workshop content and resources, delivery of the workshop, recruiting and training youth facilitators, community development and other associated tasks.

However, a number of factors have influenced this plan. First, there are impending changes to the CYO and a lack of clarity around the time frames for the creation of a new office called the Representative for Children and Youth. As such, a decision has been made not to pursue this direction and to await the establishment of the new Representative for Children and Youth. Second, the FBCYICN has made a decision to withdraw as a project partner due to other program requirements. However, the FBCYICN will be represented on the R2S Steering Committee. Finally, there are also impending changes within MCFD and as such further work must be done to gain the support and commitment of MCFD both centrally and regionally. Ultimately, the continuation and success of the next phase of the project rests on whether MCFD assesses R2S as being a useful tool in assisting them with their mandated responsibility to educate young people about their rights and facilitate their participation in decisions affecting them and is willing to work with the community to implement R2S.

## HOW ARE THE WORKSHOPS DELIVERED?

# R i g h t s 2 S U C C E S S

Youth-facilitated children's rights, participation and self-advocacy workshops for children and youth in care or at risk and the adults who support them.

**What:** Rights 2 Success (R2S) is comprised of two sessions: One session is a three-hour workshop for children and youth in care and at risk that teaches them about their rights and how to advocate for their rights on their own behalf; and the second session is a two-hour workshop for service providers, parents, caregivers, advocates and guardians on advancing the rights and participation of children and youth in care and at risk in our community.

**Who:** The adult workshop is for adults who are working with children and youth in care or at risk who are attending the R2S workshop. This includes, for example, their social workers, youth workers, one-to-one workers, parents, caregivers, advocates, and guardians. The youth workshop is for young people over the age 12 who are in government care or receiving MCFD direct or funded services such as mental health, foster care, family & youth services, youth justice, youth agreements.

**How:** Bringing R2S to a community is seen as a partnership between the provincial project partners (The Child and Youth Officer for BC (CYO), the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN), and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and the local MCFD office or delegated Aboriginal agency and a lead community agency in the five regions. The lead community agency will work with their local MCFD office or delegated Aboriginal agency to do the actual organizing of the workshops (where, who, etc). There is a partnership agreement that is signed by all parties and outlines the roles and responsibilities of each.

**Hosted by:** A lead community agency and local MCFD office or delegated Aboriginal agency.

**When:** To be determined by hosting organizations and what will work best for all the participants and in particular, the young people.

**Where:** community-based location that is child and youth friendly (community centre, youth drop-in centre, etc)

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS**

### **A. Adult Session**

#### **PURPOSE**

To educate the adults in the lives of young people (MCFD staff, community service providers, and caregivers) about their role in actualizing children's rights.

#### **GOALS**

- 1) Provide adult participants with an increased awareness of the rights of children and youth, the importance of achieving these rights.
- 2) Dispel the myths around rights – for example, the myth that 'teaching children and youth about their rights is dangerous' or the myth that 'rights can be withheld when responsibilities are not properly adhered to'. Instead we will promote the approach that supports the child's development, their participation in their family and community, and facilitates their genuine respect for, and understanding of, the rights of others.
- 3) To increase the capacity of adult participants to educate young people of their rights, develop ways to incorporate opportunities for meaningful participation of youth and to incorporate views of children and youth in care and at risk about their experiences into policy development.
- 4) To bring together service providers, parents, caregivers, advocates, guardians and citizens to discuss the rights of children and youth in their community and ways they could work together to support their rights, participation and self-advocacy of children and youth.

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Adults will have an increased understanding of UNCRC Rights and, depending on the target audience, the rights of children and youth in care, in custody, aboriginal children and youth, etc.
  - a) Adults will have an increased understanding of the importance of rights in:
    - Protecting children and youth from harm and abuse
    - The achievement of rights for all citizens
    - Increasing the motivation of children, youth and families to reach out for support services they need and thereby ensuring the achievement of successful outcomes
    - Assisting children and youth to participate in a meaningful way in decisions about the services they are receiving and identifying the services they need.
    - Increasing the capacity of children and youth to problem solve, advocate for themselves, respect the diverse views of others and exercise social responsibility
  - b) Adults will have had a chance explore and dialogue about "what it means for children and youth to have rights".

- c) Adults will, through active learning and resource hand-outs, acquire tools to help educate children and youth about their rights.
- 2) Adults will have an increased understanding of the importance of the participation rights of children and youth and the value of participation in decisions affecting them
    - a) Adults will acquire ideas of how to encourage the participation of children and youth in decision making, service evaluations and plans for their future
    - b) Adults will acquire a better understanding of the value of insights from children and youth in care and at risk about their experiences and the role they can play in informing policy, practice and program development
    - c) Adults will have a greater understanding of the importance of advocacy in supporting meaningful participation and will acquire resources that will assist them in advocating for children and youth
  - 3) Adults will be informed about the content of the R2S workshop for youth and will see how they can support youth participants.
  - 4) Adults will acquire an awareness of how their community currently supports children and youth in rights, participation and advocacy, and will make a commitment to building on those strengths.

## **KEY MESSAGES**

- Children and youth have rights specifically for them. These rights basically outline what we want for our young people. These rights do not take away from the rights of families – in fact, the rights of children and youth are best realized within the context of family, community and culture.
- Children and youth have a right to participation. This right helps ensure that all their other rights are being met. When children and youth have a say in matters affecting them, this doesn't mean they should always get their way, but, their views should be genuinely considered. Only when their views are genuinely considered are good decisions made.
- Advocacy is a good thing – it is a tool we use to assist children and youth to participate.
- Good advocacy is about good listening and communication skills as well as a commitment to cooperative problem-solving.
- You are already doing a lot of this stuff – supporting the rights of children and youth, encouraging meaningful participation and advocating for and with children and youth. We are just giving it a name and encouraging you to continue to build on your skills and strengths to support the rights of children and youth. It is the responsibility of adults to properly teach young people about their rights.

## Agenda

*Hosted by:*

*Time:*

*Date:*

1. Introductions and Welcome
2. Exploration of the Rights of Children and Youth
  - What do we want for our children and youth?
  - Teaching children and youth about rights: concerns and benefits
  - What we are teaching in the R2S workshop about rights and your role
3. Exploration of the Right to Participate
  - What does participation mean? What does it mean for young people? What are the challenges young people face to participation?
  - Advocacy: the skills, the challenges, and your role
  - What we are teaching in the R2S workshop about participation and advocacy
4. Mapping your community
  - How are children currently supported in your community?
  - What are ways that you, individually and as a community, can support young people?
  - What resources are available to you to support young people?
5. Evaluation

## **B. YOUTH SESSION**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the workshop is to advance the rights of children and youth as stipulated in the UNCRC and the CF&CS Act by teaching children and youth in care and “at risk” child and youth about their rights, and how to advocate for themselves and others to fulfill those rights and participate in decisions that affect them. Increasing children and youth’s knowledge of their rights leads to an increased ability to protect themselves, an increased understanding of the rights of others, and an increased ability to participate in decisions that affect them.

This workshop will look at rights, participation and advocacy and how, working together, they help to ensure children and youth are better able to realize their rights and get what they need.

### **GOALS**

1. To bring children and youth in care and “at risk” children and youth together in a safe environment in their community and within the context of their culture and provide the opportunity for a dialogue and discussion on rights.
2. To nurture the strengths, interests and abilities of young people to become involved in decision-making at an individual level and a systemic level by providing rights knowledge and a chance to develop their advocacy and participation skills.

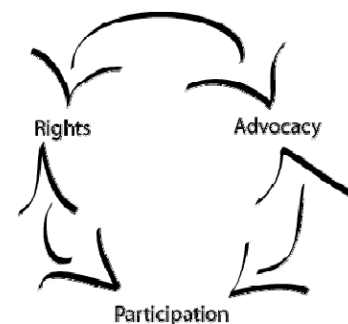
### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Understanding of the key messages on the Rights to Success.
2. Rights:
  - Working knowledge of rights (4 B’s) and the difference between rights, needs and desires.
  - Knowledge of “where to look” to find out more about their rights (resources)
  - Increased awareness of history/how different rights relate
  - Reality-based understanding of what it means to have rights (rights within the context of family and community and respect for others)
  - How to most effectively claim your rights
3. Participation
  - Understanding of the value in participation to fulfilling rights
  - Understanding that participation means standing up for your needs (advocating for yourself) and working cooperatively with others.
4. Advocacy
  - Working knowledge and demonstration of advocacy skills and ability to link advocacy to their own experiences
  - Understanding that advocacy is a tool for participation and that you are your own best advocate.

- Understanding that sometimes to participate meaningfully, you need to get someone to help advocate on your behalf. Others may need you to help them advocate (difference between self and other advocacy).

## KEY MESSAGES

- All children and youth have rights that are written down in the UN Convention on the Right of the Child – a document agreed upon by all countries in the world, except the US and Somalia. Some young people also have rights under Canadian and BC laws.
- Rights tell you what you are entitled to and therefore, you should have a good idea of what your rights are.
- If you forget what all your rights are, or want more info on them, you should know where to go to get help.
- All children and youth have rights, and adults have rights too, so it is important to remember and respect that when exercising your rights.
- Experience has told us that to help you get all of your rights fulfilled, your right to participate is very important - it is best when you participate in all decisions affecting you so that good decisions are made and your rights are fulfilled.
- Sometimes you need to stand up for yourself so that you can participate and so that your other rights are fulfilled. In other words, sometimes you have to advocate for yourself.
- Experience has also told us that advocating for yourself by shouting from the rooftops is not always the most effective way to get your rights fulfilled. Experience has told us that, usually, the best way to advocate for yourself is to really know what your own needs are and stand up for them, but also be willing to work cooperatively with others. This means using good communication (both talking and listening), respecting other peoples needs and rights, and being willing to work cooperatively to get to a solution. If this doesn't work for some reason, being your own best advocate also means being willing to reach out to someone you trust to help advocate for you if you need it.
- Even after you get help in advocating for yourself, it is important to remember that although it is your right to be heard in decisions that affect you, this does not mean that you will always get exactly what you want.
- Knowing your rights, participating in decisions that affect you, and self-advocacy are closely linked and go hand-in-hand.



## **Rights 2 Success Workshop Agenda**

*Note: This is a workshop for youth between the ages of 13-18 years old. The workshop should have between 8-15 participants. There should be a minimum half-hour break before the Participation and Advocacy section.*

*Hosted by:*

*Date:*

*Time:*

1. Introductions and Welcome
  
2. Rights of Children and Youth
  - What are my rights?
  - What does it mean to have rights and how do I use them?
  
3. Participation and Advocacy
  - Self-Advocacy: How can I really participate and be heard?
  - Advocacy Support: What if I want to participate but they don't listen?
  
4. Spread the word
  
5. What other resources are out there for me?
  
6. Evaluation

## **Rights 2 Success: Future Directions**

1. The evaluation of the project suggests that there is value in pursuing the implementation of Rights 2 Success. The evaluation provides an in-depth analysis of the piloting process and identifies the strengths and the challenges. The accompanying recommendations provide a comprehensive framework that outlines how to overcome the challenges and supports the continuance of this important initiative on behalf of children in care and at risk in this province.
2. Community sustainability of the workshops is one of the key goals of the project. However, the complexities associated with this project indicate that it would be premature to proceed in this direction and that Rights 2 Success should be held centrally for a period of time to address the issues arising from the evaluation and develop an implementation plan that incorporates the learning and engages the community in the process of designing how best to bring R2S to their community.
3. Community Sustainability will be achieved by:
  - Obtaining the support of MCFD to implement Rights 2 Success as part of “good practice” and “quality assurance.” MCFD is mandated to educate young people in care about their rights. R2S is a tool that can help to fulfill this mandate.
  - Obtaining the support of youth serving organizations to deliver Rights 2 Success as part of their service delivery model
4. Ideally, resources should be dedicated to recruit and hire young people to fulfill the role of R2S Project Coordinator and a Project Assistant. This would be consistent with the principles of youth participation.
5. It is important to recognize the current context within which Rights 2 Success is being promoted. The three project partners for Phase 1 are at different places in terms of their potential involvement with R2S. First, the evaluation report was written prior to the release of the Hughes Report. As a result of this report, MCFD is currently undergoing significant changes and restructuring. The Child and Youth Officer for BC will be replaced by the Representative for Children and Youth and the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks has made a decision to withdraw as a project partner but to remain on the Steering Committee. While there are many unknowns about the future directions of the organizations, it is safe to assume that children’s rights will and should be at the centre of the work.
6. The youth workshop should include a component that safely and more effectively allows for the “youth voice and experience” in the system to be heard and documented. This will contribute to the identification of what is

working well in the system as well as the issues affecting young people within the community that can be brought forward to the service providers.

7. Long term R2S goals should include mobilizing and providing tools to the community to directly support their own child rights education. This will need to include community leaders partnering with children and youth in their community to identify strengths and build on them to fill gaps in children's rights implementation.
8. Rights 2 Success needs to be positioned within the larger context of current Children's Rights Initiatives. There are a number of projects and organizations that have an interest in children's rights. There is a real window of opportunity to situate R2S within the broader scope of children's rights on a provincial level. It was suggested that we look at the creation of a Children's Rights Round Table.
9. Rights 2 Success needs to be considered from the perspective of "what is the relevance of rights education?" It is an important topic. We need to have a "rights lens" in all the work that we do.
10. There needs to be delivery of a consistent message about the importance of children's rights and approach it using Appreciative Inquiry. This approach focuses on what is working well and how to build on strengths.
11. Conceptually, the idea of children's rights is acknowledged; however, it remains an abstract concept that needs to be grounded in reality. What do children's rights look like in everyday life? How do we develop some key messages that provide a common language?
12. Rights awareness, rights education and rights monitoring must be brought together on a provincial level.
13. The membership of the current Steering Committee should be expanded to ensure that it is fully representative of BC's diversity.
14. Rights 2 Success must be rooted not only in government and ministerial work but must be grounded a community-driven initiative. There also needs to be a "next steps" component to the workshop so that the community continues to engage in the dialogue and moves it beyond the individual.

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