

YOUNG ★ PARENTS SUPPORT NETWORK!

OFFICE HOURS:

9am-noon

Monday-Friday

2541 Empire Street

250.384.0552

January 2014

Winter Program Dates:

- **Monday morning drop-in** 10am-noon except Statutory Holidays
- **Parent-tot Wellness Spot:** Wednesdays January 29th ~ April 2nd 11am-12:30 @ Vic West Community Association
- **Future Planning Information Session:** Friday, February 14th 10-noon
- **Future Planning:** Fridays February 21st ~ May 23rd 10am-noon
- **Parenting Tool Box:** Tuesdays March 25th-May 13th 5-7pm

Our groups always include healthy snacks & bus tickets. Future Planning & Parenting Toolbox also include free onsite childcare.

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Indigenous Leadership Project

Over half of our board of directors are Indigenous young women.

We don't know of any other organization that has such a large group of Indigenous young women in leadership roles. We don't seek out Indigenous women to join our board, it just happens. Ours is a consumer board, & as 34-56% of the families we serve identify as Indigenous, it makes sense that our board represents the community we serve in this way.

But it still makes us unique.

And raises some interesting questions:

- How can we take advantage of the opportunity to revision board & organizational practices to align with Indigenous leadership principles, as they make sense to Indigenous young women?
- What Indigenous leadership approaches are compatible with a non-profit board structure?
- How can we adapt our organizational structure and our practice with families to reflect this organizational priority?

These are the questions we have been digging into, in part with a capacity-building grant from the United Way.

To assist us in this process over the next few months, long-time board member Chelsea Kelly has joined us as a practicum student. Researching Indigenous Leadership models and working with the Board of Directors on this theme will be her primary project during her time with us.

meet CHELSEA!



Hi, my name is Chelsea and I'm entering my fourth year at UVic's School of Social Work in the Indigenous Child Welfare Specialization. I'm from the Sto:lo Nation in the Fraser Valley and was raised in Vancouver. I moved to Victoria in 2008 and started participating in groups at YPSN after I had my son, Jesse, in 2010. Later that year I joined the Board and now I've switched gears to do my practicum here! I'm thrilled to have remained connected to YPSN over the past 3 years and feel extremely fortunate to be able to do my practicum here, where everybody is so accepting, warm, and friendly. I look forward to meeting all of the wonderful people and little people that grace us with their presence!

meet nicole!



Hello, my name is Nicole and I am a third year student in the UVic Social Work program. I grew up in Burlington, Ontario and just moved to Victoria in August to attend UVic. The city is still new to me but I have enjoyed exploring some of the many things that Victoria and BC have to offer. Since having the ocean within minutes is new for me, I try to go as often as I can. I love going down to the beach with a coffee and a book or even just sitting listening to the waves. I also am really enjoying winter in Victoria, the lack of snow and freezing temperatures (compared to Ontario) is a nice change! I started running last year and completed my first 5k run in July. I also enjoy going to the gym, and have taken up a bit of yoga. I am excited to be doing my practicum with YPSN, in such a supportive and empowering community and I am looking forward to meeting everyone!

THE awesome POSSUMS & THE GOODLiFE ViCTORiA maRATHON

October 12, 5am, we were at the inner harbour, setting up for a full day at the Goodlife Victoria Marathon. 2013 was our 1st year as a marathon charity, and we're already recruiting our team for 2014.

Come run with us!

In 2013, our team was called the **Awesome Possums** because opossums are tenacious... just like marathoners & young parents:



Thank you to everyone who ran, volunteered & donated, especially **Samantha Hosie** (volunteer extraordinaire), who coordinated our volunteers & enthusiastically lead our cheering station!

THANK YOU!

To...

- [Andrea Moire](#) communications student at Royal Roads University for putting together a fantastic communications package for us!
- [Mothering Touch Centre](#) for ongoing donations including \$, diapers & baby slings
- [Thyme Maternity](#) for bags & bags of new maternity clothes for our Free Store!
- Our long-time volunteer [Suzanne Bristow](#) for keeping the toys clean & organized in our family centre!

11 ways to advocate for your kid as a young parent

*From the YPSN blog
by Petra Chambers-Sinclair*

Whether your kids are born hell-raisers, have special needs or are happy-conformists, or an exhilarating mixture of the three, they will need your advocacy at some point.

And you are, by nature, your child's advocate. You watch out for & speak up for your kid.

But we aren't taught advocacy skills, and the places where advocacy is required (schools, hospitals, government ministries) can be intimidating.

Take schools.

As a parent, I've experienced a drastic change in how school staff has treated me from the time I was young & poor 20+ years ago, compared to how I am treated now.

Back then, if my kid was misbehaving (& my #2 kid spent more time in the principal's office than in class), the assumption was that our home life & my sub-standard parenting were probably the cause.

Turns out its true!

That's how it felt, anyway.

I didn't know it was true until I reached my early 40's and figured out how to dress so I didn't look poor (even when most of my clothes still come from thrift stores).

Now when I walk into the office of my #3 kid's high school (I was in there this morning), everyone there acts like what I have to say is important, because I now *look* like my opinion should matter.

So it's effortless for me to advocate for her.

Last year she ended up in a class full of zesty behaviour cases. I spoke to the teacher, then the principal and got her switched. Just like that. Even



OUR FUNDERS



- The United Way of Greater Victoria
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- The Province of British Columbia through the BC Gaming Commission
- The Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island
- The Vancouver Foundation
- The Victoria Foundation

11 ways to advocate for your kid continued...

though I know for a fact a number of other parents had tried & failed to get their kids switched out of that class.

Flashback 24 years:

The first time I tried to advocate, I was trying to tell the principal that my #1 kid was terrified of the noise of the leaf blower, and hid inside at recess whenever the leaf blower guys were out.

The principal did not invite me into her office to talk, like she would now.

She just looked me up & down and said: *They work 8:30 to 4:30, just like everybody else.* And walked away.

The inference being that it was 9am, and I clearly was not working. *Yes, what a deadbeat, walking her kid to Kindergarten.*

I know that if I made the same request now, I would be invited into her office, we would have a cordial, friendly chat, and the leaf blowers would not plague my child **ever** again.

So what can you do?

Eventually you will get older.

And older people are usually less poor.

But until that time, all you can do is work on becoming a talented advocate.

Here are my 11 tips for that:

1. **Get to know your kid's teacher & principal before there are problems.** Go out of your way to let them know you exist & that you appreciate them. Bring a jam jar & pick a flower on the way to school for their desk, maybe. They'll be touched & they'll remember you & they'll be much less likely assume you're a lunatic when you get all mama-bear on them about your kid.
2. **Don't assume you have all the information.** There are always more sides to the story. If you begin by being curious you will be less likely to provoke defensiveness.
3. **Plan what you want to say** & write short notes for yourself so you don't forget what is important when things get stressful.



DONATE TO YPSN

- Donate now using the blue Canada Helps button on our website.
- Arrange a fundraiser at your workplace, with proceeds to Young Parents Support Network (we'd be delighted to feature your workplace on our website and other social media).
- Get your family involved! Suggest a donation to Young Parents Support Network. Get in touch with us if you need information to share with friends & family. Or direct them to our website.
- Arrange a meeting with our Executive Director to discuss your donation: margo@ypsn.ca or 250.384.0552
- Ask your employer to match your donation!
- Mail a cheque to:
Young Parents Support Network;
2541 Empire Street;
Victoria BC V8T-3M3

11 ways to advocate for your kid continued...

4. **Document.** Write down everything, including names & dates. Save e-mails.
5. **Bring an ally.** You are always allowed to bring someone with you to meetings. Just be sure they will help your cause & not get rowdy & make things worse!
6. **Share your child's strengths.** Sometimes everyone gets too focused on the fact that your kid is throwing pop cans at buses during recess or spends his school day rolling around on the floor. If this is the case, they may not be seeing his strengths clearly, and may not be able to consider them when making a plan. Be sure to tell them that he is kind to animals, has a great sense of humour, or is fascinated by bugs. Your kid is not just a list of aggravating behaviour problems, no matter how long that list might be.
7. **Bring solutions.** Have some ideas for how to resolve the issue, so you aren't just complaining. Bringing solutions also sends the message that you are one of the decision makers.
8. **Raise your concern respectfully.** Don't call your kid's principal a dick. Seriously. Even if she's acting like one. I only mention that because it's happened. Recently.
9. **Don't be afraid to ask questions.** You need to understand what is going on so you can advocate for your kid. Remember, you know a lot that the professionals in the room do not. They might be totally lost if you took them out their environment & put them into yours. If you are not sure if you understand, repeat what has been said in your own words and ask if you have it right.
10. **Use the 'P' word.** If you believe that your concern has been ignored because you are young, or poor, or Indigenous, or Latina, or because you have a hard time expressing yourself, then say so. It may not be true, but the professional will know that prejudiced behaviour is unacceptable & may become more accommodating if you respectfully suggest that prejudice may be at play.
11. **Think before you act.** If we think there is a threat to our kid, it can actually change how our



WHAT DOES YOUR DONATION DO?

You decide where your money goes when you make a donation to YPSN. For example:

- \$50 will buy healthy food for a hungry child at weekly drop-in programs for one year (food brings families to programs which ensure children are resourced & visible!)
- \$100 provides a grant to a young mum who is returning to school for application fees & school supplies
- \$200 buys emergency food vouchers for 10 hungry families
- \$500 buys outreach support to connect & resource an isolated struggling family for a year

11 ways to advocate for your kid continued...

brain functions. We can lose the ability to think clearly, especially if we have a history of trauma. The most ancient part of our brains (called the Amygdala) is what enables us to run from danger or fight off a predator without thinking too much about it. We just do it, because the Amygdala kicks in & handles that for us. When the Amygdala gets activated, the rest of our brain (the thinking part) get in the back seat. Or sometimes even out of the car altogether. If you have a history of trauma this probably happens more rapidly than for people who don't. Try to advocate for your child when your entire brain is available. Sometimes that means sleeping on it.



Young Parents Support Network offers individualized support and groups programs to pregnant & parenting youth on Southern Vancouver Island. For more information visit: www.ypsn.ca



**CREATE THE FUTURE YOU WANT:
FOR YOURSELF & FOR YOUR FAMILY...**

Our Future Planning Program is designed to get you there.

The YPSN logo features a central red heart surrounded by four hands in blue, pink, green, and orange, all set against a white background with a blue border.