



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANADA

from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

*in youth-friendly language!*

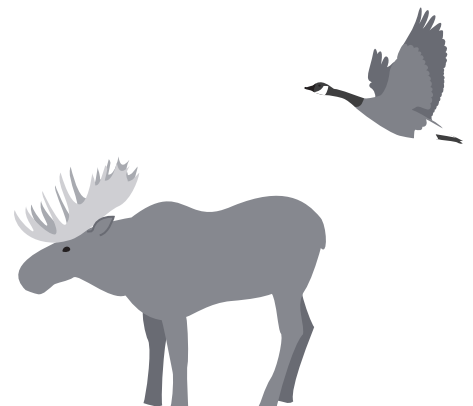


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PREPARED BY:

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UNICEF Canada



2013

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**Provincial Advocate**  
*for Children & Youth*

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## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the main authors of this report, the young people working at Ontario's Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

A big thank you also goes out to all of the children and youth in Canada who are raising awareness about children's rights in Canada and working to make positive change!

## Feedback

If you have any feedback about this document or about which recommendations (Concluding Observations) you think are most important to children in Canada, we want to hear from you!

Please email us at [policy@unicef.ca](mailto:policy@unicef.ca) or [advocacy@provincialadvocate.on.ca](mailto:advocacy@provincialadvocate.on.ca)







## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANADA

from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

### Check it out!

Words in green are **Key Words** and appear in the **Definitions** section. See page 18.

## Introduction

The **United Nations** is a worldwide organization of 193 countries who work together to make the world a better place for everyone. It aims to keep international peace and security, to develop friendships between countries and to promote respect and awareness about human rights.

To do all of these things, the United Nations, which is composed of member governments, creates lists of rights. One of these lists is specifically for children and it's called the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention)**. The Convention is an international document that the governments of countries sign to make sure that all children under the age of 18 have their human rights. Human rights are basic things that every child needs to live and grow up in a healthy way – like the right to food and water, the right to be safe and the right to be heard. Every

child is born with the same human rights – they cannot be taken away – but sometimes governments and others responsible for protecting and providing the conditions for these rights do not fulfill them as best as they can.

United Nations  
Convention on the  
Rights of the Child



The **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (the CRC Committee)** is a group of experts who examine countries to see how well they are protecting the human rights of children. In September 2012, the CRC Committee reviewed Canada to see how well the Government of Canada is protecting the rights of children.



The CRC Committee did a lot of research about Canada. They read reports and met with children's rights groups from Canada and with government representatives to get a better understanding of how Canada can improve on fulfilling the human rights of children.

This document is a summary of the recommendations (**Concluding Observations**) that the CRC Committee has made for the Government of Canada to make sure that **all children in Canada under the age of 18 have all the rights listed in the Convention**.

The original Concluding Observations can be found at the following website: [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC-C-CAN-CO-3-4\\_en.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC-C-CAN-CO-3-4_en.pdf)



## Summary of Recommendations for Canada

The CRC Committee thinks that the **Government** of Canada (including the federal, provincial and territorial governments) should do the following things:

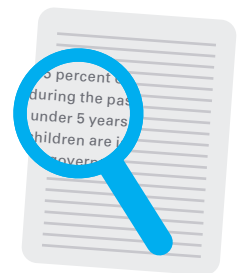
1. Do everything it can to carry out the recommendations that the CRC Committee made in 1995 and 2006. *(Concluding Observation #1, paragraph 8)*
2. Remove the reservation (which limits how the government accepts a part of the **Convention**) the government made to article 37(c), so that **children** are always kept separate from adults if they are in a **detention** centre. *(Concluding Observation #2, paragraph 9)*
3. Change federal and provincial/territorial laws to make sure all Convention rights are fully and equally protected no matter what province or territory a child lives in. *(Concluding Observation #3, paragraph 11)*
4. Create a **national** plan that the federal government and all provinces and territories will follow to make sure that children have their rights. This plan should have clear priorities, targets and responsibilities.



**Young people and the general public should be involved in the creation of this plan.**

*(Concluding Observation #4, paragraph 13)*

5. Create a national group that has staff who work at the federal and provincial/territorial government that is responsible for making sure the Convention is applied across Canada and that children, youth and the **public** are included in the group. *(Concluding Observation #5, paragraph 15)*
6. Define a **budget** for children that will make sure there is enough money set aside for children's needs across the country and that it includes an additional budget for children who are **underserved**. Governments should make children a priority when they make decisions on how to spend public money. *(Concluding Observation #6, paragraph 17)*
7. Focus the money that the government gives to low-income countries on programs and **services** that help children. *(Concluding Observation #7, paragraph 19)*
8. Gather and collect national information about children and how government laws, programs and services are making a difference in their lives. The information should tell how well children are doing across the country from birth to age 18 in all areas of their rights, and should include information about underserved children to help the government create policies and programs for children. *(Concluding Observation #8, paragraph 21)*



## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

9. Establish a **National Children’s Commissioner** – a national leader who would be responsible for making sure the **rights of children** are considered and protected when the federal government makes decisions – and make sure that the Commissioner’s Office is provided with the support it needs to do its job.

*(Concluding Observation #9, paragraph 23)*

10. Do more to **raise awareness about the Convention** – with the general public, with professionals who work with children (including judges, police, social workers, educators and all others) and with children themselves – and how to use it to help children. Use the Internet and develop educational programs so that all children can learn about the Convention in and out of school.

*(Concluding Observation #10, paragraph 25)*

11. Teach government staff and professionals who work with children (including judges, police, social workers, educators and all others) on the Convention and how they can use it to make sure public **policy**, programs, and decision-making processes support **children’s rights**.

*(Concluding Observation #11, paragraph 27)*

12. Make sure that businesses follow **international** and national rules about their actions affecting the environment, workers, Aboriginal peoples and especially children’s rights to make sure that:

- Canadian businesses that work outside Canada do not put at risk the **human rights** of people or the environment.
- Businesses are **monitored** and there are **consequences** if businesses do not protect the rights of children living in Canada or outside Canada.
- The public knows about any plans that may pollute the environment or impact human rights and has the chance to have a say.

*(Concluding Observation #12, paragraph 29)*

13. Make sure all children under 18 are protected, that no child in conflict with the law is treated as an adult, and that all children who are victims of **sexual harm** get the **protection** they need.

*(Concluding Observation #13, paragraph 31)*





## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

14. Report on actions taken to deal with racism and reduce the **discrimination** that some children experience by:

- a) Reducing the high number of **Aboriginal** and **African-Canadian** children in jails and in out-of-home care (including foster care, kinship care, children's aid, group homes, etc.).
- b) Making sure all children have access to basic services (such as education, health services and mental health services), especially underserved children.
- c) Making sure that programs and policies consider all genders, especially programs that are created for stopping violence, ending poverty and helping children who are underserved.
- d) Making sure that Aboriginal children have **fair funding** and access to services and programs.

e) Think of ways to provide money to families who need it the most to help and support those living in poverty.

*(Concluding Observation #14, paragraph 33)*

15. Consider the **best interests** of the child in all of Canada's policies and programs and in the courts when decisions are made that have an impact on children.

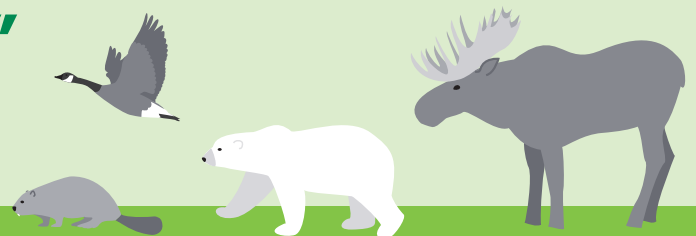
*(Concluding Observation #15, paragraph 35)*

16. Give children the **right to be heard** when final decisions are being made that will affect them (including in education, child welfare, **immigration** and all aspects of their rights), especially when decisions about their best interests are being made in cases that involve the law. If a decision is made that ignores children's right to express their views, they should have the option to complain so that a child has a choice in changing the decision.

*(Concluding Observation #16, paragraph 37)*

“ Give children the right to be heard when final decisions are being made that will affect them. ”

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION #16, PARAGRAPH 37





## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

17. Make sure children's birth certificates are not changed **illegally**. If they have been changed, make sure they are fixed to include all the information available about their identity, including who their parents are.

*(Concluding Observation #17, paragraph 39)*

18. Make sure children born outside of Canada to Canadian parents have equal access to Canadian citizenship.

*(Concluding Observation #18, paragraph 41)*

19. **Make sure all children learn about their culture and heritage** and allow both men and women from Aboriginal families to pass on their Aboriginal **status** to their grandchildren.

*(Concluding Observation #19, paragraph 43)*

20. **Outlaw physical punishment of children of all age groups**. The CRC Committee recommends that governments:

- a) Create greater awareness about better ways of punishment, respect for children's rights to be treated with **dignity** and the negative results of physical punishment on children.
- b) Make sure all adults working with children report cases of violence against children.

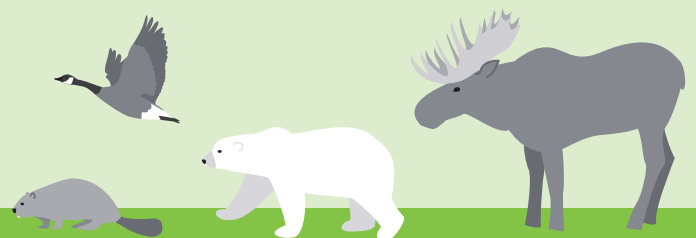
*(Concluding Observation #20, paragraph 45)*

21. Do more and work together to **reduce violence against children**, including the following:

- a) Create a national plan to **prevent** all types of violence against children and make sure there is money and people to carry out and monitor the national plan.
- b) The plan needs to lower the very high level of violence against Aboriginal girls and women.
- c) Make sure all children who are victims of violence are protected and have access to services and people who can help them to cope with their experiences.

“ Make sure all children who are victims of violence are protected and have access to services and people who can help children to cope with their experiences. ”

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION #21c, PARAGRAPH 47





## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

- d) Make sure that children who are removed from their families because of violence in the home have follow-up support if they return home.

*(Concluding Observation #21, paragraph 47)*

**22.** Do more to **prevent child sexual abuse** and the sale of children for sex, including stricter punishment of people who are responsible for these crimes. Canada can do more to solve the disappearance and murder of Aboriginal girls. The CRC Committee is asking the governments to:

- a) Make bigger and better plans that deal with violence to make sure it includes all types of sexual harm.
- b) Create a plan that will strengthen law **enforcement** to solve more cases that involve sex-related crimes against children, including missing girls.
- c) Create stricter punishment for those who are guilty of sex crimes against children.
- d) Create programs to monitor and treat criminals who are guilty of sex crimes against children to prevent further harm to children.

*(Concluding Observation #22, paragraph 49)*

**23.** Use the law, law enforcement and other actions to **protect children from forced under-aged marriages**, including **polygamy**.

*(Concluding Observation #23, paragraph 51)*

**24. Reduce violence against children** of all types by:

- a) Creating a national plan to stop all forms of violence against children.
- b) Setting up a way for governments at all levels and others to come together to share information and decide on different ways to reduce violence against children.
- c) Paying specific attention to how violence affects boys and girls differently.
- d) Cooperating with the United Nations to reduce violence against children.

*(Concluding Observation #24, paragraph 52)*

**25.** Support local programs to help parents raise their children, such as programs that help teenage mothers finish their education while they care for their children and culturally appropriate programs for specific communities.

*(Concluding Observation #25, paragraph 54)*

**26.** Provide more assistance and support services to parents to avoid where possible children being brought into government care, and:

- a) Make sure the reasons for removing a child from his or her family are reviewed by many different professionals and are in line with the Convention. Try to resolve the situation as quickly as possible so that children have the best chance for a permanent family situation.

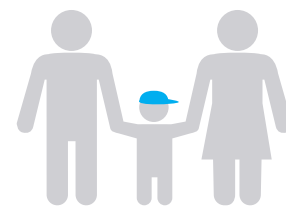
## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

- b) Create a rules for choosing child care workers. Make sure they are graded based on these standards and that they are trained and supported by these standards.
- c) Make sure all children in care have equal access to education and health care.
- d) Make sure that all children have a clear way to report abuse and neglect and that anyone found to be abusing or neglecting children is stopped and punished.
- e) Make sure all children in care are prepared to leave government care, by helping and supporting them during the change. This includes ensuring they have a say and providing support (which also includes money).
- f) Work with Aboriginal and **minority** community leaders to make sure there are culturally based solutions for children being raised in care.

*(Concluding Observation #26, paragraph 56)*

**27.** There are no policies or rules for adoption that are the same across federal, provincial and territorial governments, and not enough information on the situation of adopted children. The CRC Committee recommends that the Government of Canada:

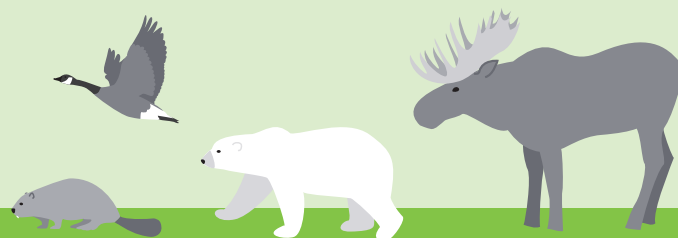
- a) Make sure there is one set of adoptions rules across all of Canada that are in line with the Convention and other international rules that protect children's rights.
- b) Make sure that information about the date and place of their birth and their birth-parents is available to adopted children.
- c) Collect better information about adoption to help understand how the adoption process is supporting the best interests of children.



*(Concluding Observation #27, paragraph 58)*

“ Make sure all children in care are prepared to leave government care, by helping and supporting them during the change. ”

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION #26e, PARAGRAPH 56





## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

### 28. Follow the **Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities** along with the Convention and:

- Collect better information about children with **disabilities** to help the federal and provincial/territorial governments to create equal opportunities for children with disabilities.
- Make sure that children with disabilities are not forced to attend schools that are only for children with disabilities; they should be able to attend schools with other children.
- Make sure that families who have children with disabilities have access to the services and supports they need, with more help to pay for the high costs of services for children with disabilities.
- Make sure all children with disabilities are protected from all forms of violence.

*(Concluding Observation #28, paragraph 60)*

### 29. Because breastfeeding is so good for children's health, but relatively few Canadian mothers breastfeed, the CRC Committee recommends:

- A stronger program to **encourage mothers to breastfeed children** from birth to 2 years of age or more.
- Monitoring the promotion and sale of breast milk replacement products and making sure they follow international rules.

*(Concluding Observation #29, paragraph 62)*

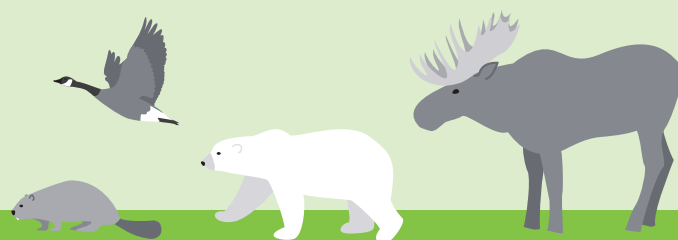
### 30. Promote healthy, active lifestyles for children and control the advertisement of fast-food and unhealthy foods that are targeted to children.

*(Concluding Observation #30, paragraph 64).*



“ Make sure that families who have children with disabilities have access to the services and supports they need... ”

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION #28c, PARAGRAPH 60



## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

**31. Support children's rights to mental health**, the CRC Committee recommends that governments and responsible **organizations**:

- a) Improve suicide prevention programs and make them more available. Increase children's access to private **counselling** services in schools and to families.
- b) Monitor the use of medication by children and work to better understand the main causes to improve how children are **diagnosed** and offered other treatments.
- c) Create a system that monitors how behavioural medicines for children are used across Canada and how children's consent is provided.

*(Concluding Observation #31, paragraph 66)*

**32.** Improve the standard of living for children, the CRC Committee recommends that:

- a) The federal government **develop a national plan to stop child poverty** by working with provincial and territorial governments.
- b) Help from the government, such as money, is given first to help children in underserved communities and those living in the worst situations.
- c) Services for Aboriginal, African-Canadian and other minorities are at the same quality provided to all children and meet their needs.

*(Concluding Observation #32, paragraph 68)*

**33.** The CRC Committee recommends these actions to help children belonging to underserved communities to get a good education:

- a) Get rid of fees for required education.
- b) **Create a national plan to lower the number of children who drop out of school**, particularly for Aboriginal and African-Canadian children, and develop this plan in partnership with Aboriginal and African-Canadian communities.
- c) Develop plans that will limit the number of children being suspended from school and sent to the police, and make sure schools have professionals that work with underserved children.
- d) Make sure that minority children and children with disabilities are fully included in school settings, with every opportunity to do as well as others and to join in.

- e) **Create plans and programs for teachers, parents and children that will help to stop bullying in schools and daycares.**



*(Concluding Observation #33, paragraph 70)*



## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

**34.** The CRC Committee recommends that the federal, provincial and territorial governments do the following things to **improve early childhood care**:

- a) Provide good quality child care and child development programs for children ages 0 to 3.
- b) Increase the availability of free or affordable early childhood care for all who need it.
- c) Create rules for training child care workers and improve their work conditions.
- d) Review the financial support families receive for early child care to make sure it fairly helps families who need it most.

*(Concluding Observation #34, paragraph 72)*

**35.** Bring laws affecting children entering Canada through immigration (including **refugee** and **asylum seeking** children) into line with the Convention and other international standards, and:

- a) Change the policy on detention to make sure that detention is only used as a last resort, in the best interests of the child, and that children who have been detained (held back) can come before a judge quickly and frequently until they can be released.
- b) Make the best interests of the child the main thought in all immigration processes, and **make sure that decisions about the best interests is always made by professionals who have been well trained to do so.**

- c) Make sure all children coming from another country who are on their own are quickly given independent guardians, not just legal representation, to promote their best interests and provide care until their Canadian citizenship is final.
- d) Make sure that all decisions about children coming from another country are made quickly to prevent children from waiting long periods of time for the decisions to be made.
- e) Use the “United Nations High Commission for Refugees Guidelines on International Protection No.8: Child Asylum Claims” to guide actions and decisions for children in immigration detention and training for immigration authorities on how to support the best interest of the child.

*(Concluding Observation #35, paragraph 74)*

**36.** Make sure that the **Optional Protocol for Children in Armed Conflict** be included in Canada’s next report and consider increasing the age of children who enter the Canadian Army to 18 years old. Also, the CRC Committee suggests that Canada should avoid recruiting children into the army who are in special situations (such as Aboriginal children and other children who live in sensitive or underserved situations).

*(Concluding Observation #36, paragraph 76)*

## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

**37.** See to it that Omar Kadr has access to programs that are for former child soldiers, and make sure that he is paid back for all the wrong things that have happened to him.

*(Concluding Observation #37, paragraph 78)*

**38.** The CRC Committee recommends that the government:

- Make sure no one under the age of 16 can work anywhere in Canada so that they can go to school full time instead of working.
- Make sure there are rules in place across Canada to protect children from unsafe work environments.
- Begin to collect better data on children who are affected by unsafe work conditions.
- Consider using the **International Labour Organization** Convention #138 to change the minimum age of employment to 16.

*(Concluding Observation #38, paragraph 80)*

**39.** Continue to **provide more training for police and professionals who help children who are victims of trafficking.**

*(Concluding Observation #39, paragraph 82)*

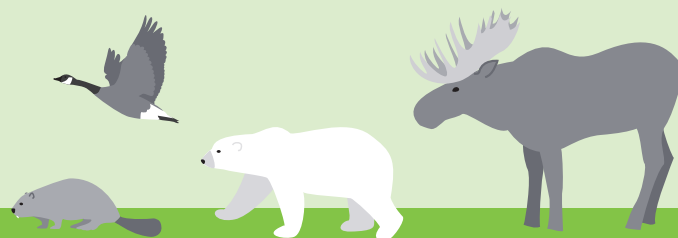
**40.** Make sure children have continued access to a helpline 24 hours a day across Canada and that there is support for the helpline so it can continue to be available to children.

*(Concluding Observation #40, paragraph 84)*



“ Make sure there are rules in place across Canada to protect children from unsafe work environments. ”

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION #38b, PARAGRAPH 80





## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

### 41. Make sure the juvenile justice system follows the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- a) Increase the age of criminal responsibility.
- b) Make sure no child is dealt with as if they were an adult, no matter the crime.
- c) Create more programs other than detention for young people who have broken the law, as well as protect the privacy of all children in the justice system.
- d) Create new guidelines for how children are physically held or controlled during arrest and detention. Do not allow the use of tasers on children.
- e) Research and understand the reason why more Aboriginal and African-Canadian children are in jails compared to children from different backgrounds. Create a plan to prevent this from happening in the future.

- f) Make sure girls and boys are separated during detention and female guards are available to monitor girls so that girls are better protected from sexual harm.

*(Concluding Observation #41, paragraph 86)*

42. Sign on to the Optional Protocol on Individual Communication and the “ILO Convention No. 138” which has to do with making sure that children 16 years or under are not allowed to work in harmful conditions.

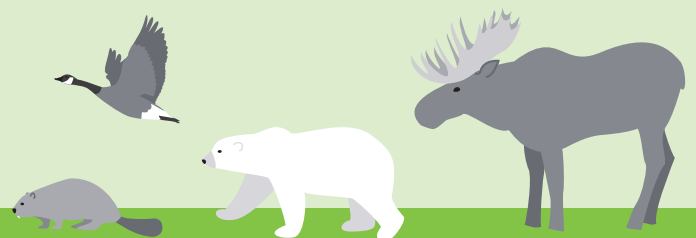
*(Concluding Observation #42, paragraph 87)*

43. Work with the Organization of American States (OAS) in putting into action the Convention and other human rights documents.

*(Concluding Observation #43, paragraph 88)*

“ Make sure no child is dealt with as if they were an adult, no matter the crime. ”

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION #41b, PARAGRAPH 86





## Summary of Recommendations for Canada (continued)

44. Make sure they are doing all that they can to make sure the recommendations of the CRC Committee are being followed. They want the federal government, the court system and the provincial government to consider any other actions that are needed.

*(Concluding Observation #44, paragraph 89)*

45. **Make government reports about the Convention available to everyone in their own language.** The report should also be available online to the public, including the Optional Protocols.

*(Concluding Observation #45, paragraph 90)*

46. Canada is invited to send their next report by July 11, 2018, and it should include information on what Canada is doing to make sure the recommendations (Concluding Observations) are followed. The CRC Committee wants Canada to make sure they follow instructions on the writing of the report. The report should not be more than 60 pages, and if they do not do this it can mean that Canada must re-write the report.

*(Concluding Observation #46, paragraph 91)*

47. Canada is also invited to submit an updated version of their last State Report that follows the guidelines outlined by the CRC Committee.

*(Concluding Observation #47, paragraph 92)*





## Definitions for Key Words

**ABORIGINAL PEOPLES** – People who are related to the the original people who lived in a region. They often have their own social, cultural and economic customs and traditions that are different from others who live in the same country. The 370 million indigenous peoples around the world contribute to enriching the world’s cultural and linguistic diversity.

**AFRICAN-CANADIANS** – People of African descent and people who define themselves as such.

**ASYLUM SEEKERS** – People who leave their home country for their own safety, for political reasons or because of war, and travel to another country hoping that the government there will protect them and allow them to stay.

**BEST INTERESTS** – A term meaning that people should always think about the result any decision they are making about a child or young person will have, and whether that decision is really the best thing for that child or young person.

**BUDGET** – a plan for how much money will be set aside for a specific need within a certain amount of time.

**CHILD PARTICIPATION** – Participation involves children and young people being able to think for themselves, express their own views and interact in positive ways with other people. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child mentions that all children have the right to participate in matters that affect them based on their age and capacity.

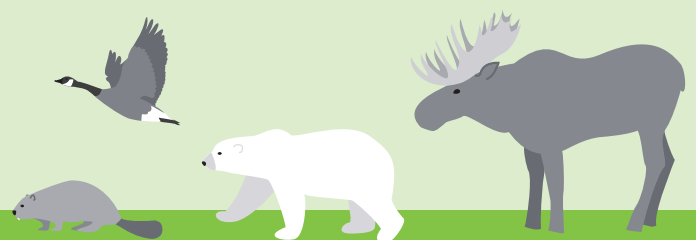
**CHILD RIGHTS** – Rights that all children (people under 18 years of age) should have to be able to live, survive and meet their full potential.

**CHILDREN** – Every human being below the age of 18. Some exceptions happen in regions where the law says that a child becomes an adult before 18.

**CIRCUMSTANCES** – A fact or condition that is relevant to an event or action.

“ Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child mentions that all children have the right to participate in matters that affect them based on their age and capacity. ”

See: CHILD PARTICIPATION



## Definitions for Key Words (continued)

**CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS** – Written advice provided by UN committees who follow human rights conventions for every country that has signed on to conventions. For example, the Committee on the Rights of the Child makes Concluding Observations to a government upon having reviewed the government’s regular report to the Committee. These are also called recommendations.

**CONSEQUENCES** – A result or effect that is usually not wanted or unpleasant.

**CONSISTENT** – Something that does not change over time.

**CONVENTION** – A convention (or treaty) is an agreement between countries to behave in a certain way and can be about many issues, as for example human rights. Governments have to do two things with conventions: first, they have to sign on to it to show that they really agree to what the convention is saying. Second, the parliament of that country needs to approve it. The second step is called ratification.

**CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (The Convention)** – An international agreement to ensure that all children enjoy their rights and have special care and protection they need as children (aged 0–18 years). The Member States of the United Nations (or countries that form part of the UN) adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. Almost every country has agreed to these rights.

**COUNSELLING** – Professional help and advice that can help to fix problems (usually personal or emotional).

**DETENTION** – To hold someone back or keep them in custody for a short amount of time.

**DIAGNOSE** – To identify a medical condition.

**DIGNITY** – To treat children with dignity means treating them with respect. All human beings are born with the same human rights, so treating people with dignity means that you respect their human rights.

**DISABILITY** – Characteristics that could make a person not able to do certain things that most people can do that is sometimes caused by an injury, illness, or other medical condition. These difficulties, when combined with obstacles imposed by society (including negative attitudes and inaccessible environment), prevent persons with disabilities from participating equally in society.

**DISCRIMINATION** – Unfair treatment of a person or group for any reason, such as ethnicity, sex, culture, religion/spirituality, or disability.

**ENFORCEMENT** – Making sure that the law is followed.

**GOVERNMENT (Federal / Provincial / Territorial)** – The group of elected people with the power to make decisions for a country (Federal), province (Provincial) or territory (Territorial).



## Definitions for Key Words (continued)

**HERITAGE** – A mixture of, beliefs and history that comes from a person’s family, ethnic background or tradition. All children have the right to learn about their heritage.

**HUMAN RIGHTS** – A set of rights that every person has. They are the basic standards that people need to survive and live in a healthy way.

**ILLEGAL** – Something that is against the law.

**IMMIGRATION** – Permanently moving from one country to live in another.

**INTERNATIONAL** – Something that involves many countries in the world. It can include all, or almost all, of the countries in the world.

**INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES** – This convention makes sure that people who are disabled have the same standard of human rights across the world as non-disabled people.

**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)** – The United Nations agency concerned with work and labour. The ILO helps to take action against child labour to make sure children are not forced to work.

**MINORITIES** – Refers to a group of people within a society that is either small in numbers or that has little or no access to social, economic, political or religious power.

**MONITOR** – To check, follow-up or keep track of something over time.

**NATIONAL** – Something that exists across one particular country.

**ORGANIZATION** – An organized group of people that has a particular purpose, like a business or a government department.

**OPTIONAL PROTOCOL FOR CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT** – A legal document that, along with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, works to protect the rights of children that are affected by war and armed (with weapons) conflict.

**POLICY** – Rules that are used to help make a plan or guide how activities or programs work.

**POLYGAMY** – Having more than one husband or wife.

**PREVENT** – To stop something from happening.

**PROTECTION** – To keep safe from harm or injury.

**PUBLIC** – All people living in a region; in this case Canada.

**PUNISHMENT** – A penalty for doing something wrong.

**REFUGEE** – A person who is forced to leave their country because his or her life is in danger.

## Definitions for Key Words (continued)

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**SENTENCES** – A set punishment for doing something against the law.

**SERVICES** – Programs that meet a particular need.

**SEXUAL HARM** – The act or threat of sexually hurting someone.

**STATUS** – Official classification given to a person. For example, if someone has status in a country, they might be a citizen or a permanent resident and that makes it easier for them to have their rights respected.

**TRAFFICKING** – Trafficking in people means recruiting (misinforming or tricking a person by promising a well-paid job) or transporting (moving a person from one place to another) or transferring (changing hands – handing over a person to another trafficker) or harbouring (keeping a person under watch for a certain period of time) or receiving of people from one place to another for the purpose of exploitation. In other words, trafficking occurs when someone is taken from the place where she or he lives (or is from) to another place for the purpose of being exploited. Exploitation means taking advantage of someone and treating them unfairly.

**UNDERSERVED** – Not having equal access to services or programs. In Canada, there are a number of different groups and communities that are often underserved, including Aboriginal children, African Canadians, children living in poverty, and children with disabilities, for example.

**UNITED NATIONS** – The international organization responsible for peace, security and cooperation around the world.

**UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD** – A group of experts that follow each country's efforts to make sure the Convention on the Rights of the Child is applied across the country.

**UNICEF** – United Nations Children's Fund. It is the agency of the United Nations that works for children's rights, survival, development and protection.

# THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

*in child friendly language*

Every child in Canada and around the world from birth to 18 has rights. Rights are what you should have or be able to do to survive, thrive and meet your full potential. All rights are equally important and are connected to each other. You are born with these rights, and no one can take them away.

UNICEF Canada wants to support you and your school as you explore rights, respect and responsibility for yourself and others here and around the world. UNICEF Canada's Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) initiative uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) to make sure everyone feels included and respected. This includes giving you meaningful opportunities to voice opinions about your school, and to make it the best school it can be!

## Article 1

Everyone under 18 has these rights.



## Article 2

All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

## Article 3

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

## Article 4

The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.



## Article 5

Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.



## Article 7

You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

## Article 6

You have the right to be alive.

## Article 8

You have the right to an identity – an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.

## Article 9

You have the right to live with your parent(s), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.

## Article 10

If you live in a different country than your parents, you have the right to be together in the same place.

## Article 11

You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.

## Article 12

You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.



## Article 13

You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

## Article 14

You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

## Article 15

You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.



## Article 16

You have the right to privacy.



## Article 17

You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.

## Article 18

You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.

## Article 20

You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.

## Article 21

You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.

## Article 19

You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.



## Article 22

You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

## Article 23

You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life.

## Article 24

You have the right to the best healthcare possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

## Article 25

If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

## 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 food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

## Article 28

You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.



## Article 29

Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

## Article 30

You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.



## Article 31

You have the right to play and rest.

## Article 32

You have the right to protection from work that harms you, and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

## Article 33

You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

## Article 34

You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

## Article 35

No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

## Article 36

You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).



## Article 37

No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way.

## Article 38

You have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

## Article 39

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

## Article 40

You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.



## Article 41

If the laws of your country provide better protection of your rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

## Article 42

You have the right to know your rights! Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.

## Article 43-54

These articles explain how governments and international organizations like UNICEF will work to ensure children are protected with their rights.









# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANADA

from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child



**Provincial Advocate**  
*for Children & Youth*