

November/December 2021



Marie's Messy Desk

By Marie Christian
Voices Director



Hey Fam! The holiday season is here again! I love twinkly lights and the thought of making people smile, but I also remember how hard this time of year can be. I hope you remember that we are here for you, and we understand.

We'd love to share the mic with you on **System Kidz!** Due to COVID, we pre-record each episode, making it even easier to include voices from everywhere in our province. Represent your

community and help Manitobans understand what it's really like to be in care: the good, the bad, and everything in-between. Tune in to System Kidz every Tuesday at 5pm on ckuw 95.9fm, or online at www.ckuw.ca.

If you've transitioned from care within the past year, you are eligible to receive **\$250 per month** to help with the cost of rent through the Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit. Visit <https://www.gov.mb.ca/housing/progs/cmhb/cmhb-youth.html> for more info and an application form.

And a reminder: there is a moratorium in place on transitions from care during the pandemic. **That means you do not have to leave care until March 23rd, 2022**, no matter your care status or your age. Call us if you have questions or need help talking to your worker.

This is your Network! We are here to connect with you.

Year 25, Newsletter 2

3rd floor, 61 Juno Street
Winnipeg, MB. R3A 1T1

Ph: 204.982.4956

Fax: 204.982.4950

Toll Free: 1.866.982.4956



@VoicesMB



@voicesmyicn



@VoicesMYICN

No Limits

By Lyn Crotty, Voices Outreach Worker
Email: lyn@voices.mb.ca
Phone: 204-982-4956 ext. 231

My name is Lyn and I am soooo



excited to be joining the Voices team! I am a fellow alumni of care, and spent my teen years bouncing around in the system, from placement shel-

ters, to locked units. During my years in care I noticed how unfairly we were treated, how our voices seemed muted, no matter how loud we screamed. I remember thinking "this needs to change" but having no idea how I could make that change happen. I felt helpless.

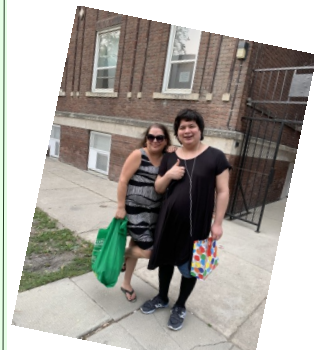
Enter Voices. The first time I heard about the Network was at my "aging out" graduation. Jainna was the guest host of the amazing party thrown by the General Authority, and she told us all about who they are and what they do. I remember thinking "wow, there are actually people out there who care about us, and

want to change the experience of youth in care." I was so inspired to try to make a difference in our community. But as most of us are all too familiar with, Life had other plans.

I faced many barriers and troubling situations after I aged out of care, such as struggles with addiction, financial instability, and homelessness, which seemed to push my dream of helping my community further and further out of reach. After a decade of struggling and working dead-end jobs, I still found myself daydreaming about the changes that needed to happen in the system. I wondered how I, as a struggling youth myself, could even begin to make that change happen. I realised I had to start with myself. I enrolled into a life skills program called LEVEL UP! Through Resource Assistance for Youth or R.a.Y. If you haven't heard of them, you should go check them out! Seriously! Through this program, they helped me gain the skills I needed, along with the confidence, to pursue my dreams, and turn that daydream into a reality. I began my job search and to my surprise the first position that popped up was for VOICES! As I read the job description, tears started to fall from my eyes. What was this feeling that had hit me? Was it hope? I had never felt like this

before. I broke down. I even tried to talk myself out of applying, telling myself there was no way someone like me could make a difference. Thankfully a very dear mentor and friend sat with me while I wrote my resume and cover letter, and even let me cover her shoulder in tears after I hit that super scary send button. She danced with me when I got the interview, held my hand during the panic attack I had before the interview and celebrated with me after I got the job. When I walked into the Voices office on my first day, I immediately felt like this was where I was always supposed to be. I was instantly accepted for who I am, as I am, where I am, despite my rocky past. I was home, with my people.

That's why my goal here at Voices is: to help you feel exactly that feeling. Accepted, loved, and hopeful. To help you thrive, not just survive, because every single one of us deserves to be loved, to be successful in our lives, and to have a community we can call our own. I truly believe that Voices is that community. So please, reach out to us, we would love to grow our family, and help you turn your dreams into a reality! I look forward to all the meeting all of you, seeing your beautiful faces (even if virtually), and helping you all thrive!



WHAT IS VOICES ALL ABOUT?

VOICES: MANITOBA'S YOUTH IN CARE NETWORK is the only youth-driven provincial network whose sole purpose is to **engage, equip, and empower** youth in and from care. We offer **support, encouragement and peer-advocacy** to youth in care and those transitioning from care to **IN(TER)DEPENDENCE**. We raise awareness of the challenges that youth-in-care face, and make our voices heard through our radio broadcast '*System Kidz*', presentations and workshops. We share our stories to help create a **better system of care** for children and youth who live away from their bio-families in foster homes and kinship care, group homes and shelters, independent living programs, and other care arrangements. We offer **scholarships and opportunities** so that youth-in-care may empower themselves with post-secondary education, and participate in activities around the province.

2021-2022 Voices Scholarship Program Award Recipients

The Voices Bursary:

Mikyaela Haas, Hannah Suvin Park

The Marie Christian Award (also known as the Lemonade Award):

Heaven McPherson, Serenity Moar

The Reach for the Stars Scholarship:

Avouri Kirton

The Honouring Our Youth Scholarship:

Darlene Keeper

The Kiwiytin Scholarship:

**Mariama Barry, Athena Hinchcliffe, Julia Laporte,
Heaven Moneyas, and Angela Taylor**

**Congratulations, Voices Scholars! We believe in you
and wish you the best this year in school!**



Be healthy



Be safe



Be heard



Be yourself

Checkin' In with Jainna

By Jainna Cabral

Voices Program Coordinator

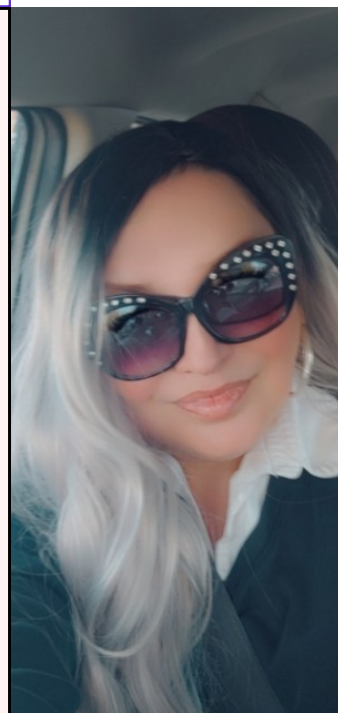
Good day friends,

My name is Jainna, I am your hostess with the mostest aka Program Coordinator and System Kidz host here at Voices. We are so thrilled to be welcoming our newest team members Tina and Lyn, as well as social work practicum student, Tim. Together we are on a mission to reach as many youth in and from care in Manitoba to unite them for the good. We hope to use our collective experiences to help make positive changes in the child welfare system and ensure that all 42 articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are honoured and actualized for all children and youth. Through youth engagement, rights and advocacy training, youth in and from care are empowered to use their voice, share their care experience, and make recommendations toward more consistent progress.

Article 6 of the UNCRC says that "*you have the right to not only live but to thrive.*" What do you need to thrive?

Here at the network we are so proud when youth in care reach for the stars and find the supports they need to thrive while in care and after care, not just survive. There is always a way and hope for better days, especially with the right supports and by being surrounded by caring village. Let us join your village, so we can cheer you on while you make your dreams a reality. We will help you find the tools you need. Each and every youth in care we meet is special and deserving of care. You Matter! Periodttt!

Yours in unity and service
Mama Jai



Volunteer Opportunities at Voices:

- ☐ Advisory Committee (alumni of care, 18+)
- ☐ System Kidz (co-hosts, music, poetry)
- ☐ Newsletter Contributor
- ☐ Mentors
- ☐ Voices Family Christmas Party Team
- ☐ Youth Speakers (solo or on a panel)

Call 204.982.4956 for more information on any of these
volunteer opportunities.

Other Great Volunteer Opportunities:

Youth Ambassadors Advisory Squad (YAAS) works with the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth to improve effectiveness and responsiveness of *all* services provided to children and youth. Learn more at www.manitobaadvocate.ca

Futures Forward Youth Advisory meets every second Friday at 2pm. They focus on issues affecting alumni of care, like education and housing. Feedback is included in program proposals that improve the services Futures Forward provides. Call Hafiz at 204-987-8661 ext 667 to register.



Making Connections, Forming Bonds

By Tina McKay, Voices Outreach Worker
tina@voices.mb.ca Phone: 204.982.4956 ext.269

Growing up with the Foster Kid label I never felt safe being myself with others. My safe space was, and still is, around books. Unlike being in care I am in control when I pick up a book. I get to make a choice, feed a mood, find the quiet space inside of me and take a breath.

Reading has been a coping device to soften the disappointment I feel with the people in my life. Characters explain everything, laying down decisions in thought and feeling. I can just walk the journey with them, learn from their mistakes, enjoy their turn of phrase without the fear of repercussion or failure.

I have carried some of these tales with me from home to home, family to family. While some novels become just brain candy, others are these founts of self-reflection. No matter my age, problem or challenge, their plots meet me where I am, helping me organize my thoughts and creating a space for vulnerability that I find very hard to expose to others, a safe place for the "What if..." sides of me.

One of my favourite books is "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint Exupery. It's about a stranded WW2 pilot and his conversation with a prince from beyond the stars. As the prince unfolds his tales from his travels across the universe, we are taken on a tour of the nature of bonds.

Bonds, or connections, can be strained while we are in care. What does it take to maintain healthy relationships? Romantic, familial, and even platonic friendships seem like extracurricular exercises that take second place to survival. With frequent changes in social workers, families and shelters it can be hard to form consistent and healthy attachments.

There's a character in the book, the Fox, who tries to educate the prince on the rules of forming connections with others. This occurs when the prince, lonely from his universe-wide travels, happens upon the fox and engages him to play. Because the fox only has a general knowledge of humans, and knows them to carry weapons and hunt his kind, he is very timid. He explains that friendship grows when people need one another, and that can only happen through personal relationship.

"To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world..." When we get to know one another, we get to know what is unique about one another.

The fox also teaches the prince the vital importance of consistency in relationships, informing him that making arrangements to meet at the same time and place encourages the fox to look forward to seeing him and the potential of creating new memories together. When I was younger I would often be given appointment dates and times with family or workers only to see them be cancelled, rescheduled or just forgotten. This inconsistency made me feel like I was not known by the people around me, that I could fall off the planet, that no one would notice if I did. Some days I still have that nagging fear, and those are the days I find myself at my bookcase, reaching out for the hundreds of little reminders that I exist and that my life has accumulated meaning through bonds.

I have finally found the consistency I crave through the friends who not only answer my calls but make plans with me, and a husband who greets me after work with dinner or a hug. Forming bonds and contributing to relationships is what led me to Voices, first as a volunteer and now as a staff member. I find myself growing excited and developing connections to my fellow staff members and to the youth who've been coming out to activities. I have found a place where I am motivated to open myself to others and accept what they offer me in return. I am thriving in the consistency of working hours that allow me to invest in others while maintaining respectful boundaries.

I often feel that I too have travelled a universe of experiences to come to a place where I finally feel ready to share my story. I am reminded of the secret shared by the fox: *"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."*

Meet Tim!

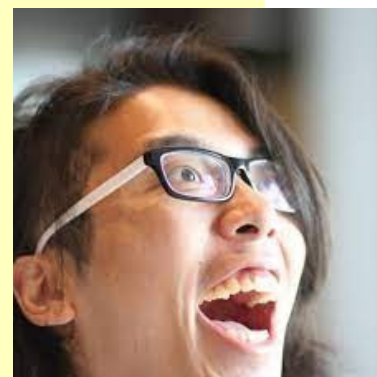
By Tim Leung, Voices Practicum Student
tim@voices.mb.ca

Hi, I'm Tim, the new guy in Voices. I'm a practicum student from the University of Manitoba. I am studying to be a social worker. My core purpose is to live with compassion and curiosity, which brings me here.

I'm an immigrant from Hong Kong learning to live as a good person residing on Turtle Island. I know that we, settlers, owe our leg up to the Indigenous folks. I'm joining Voices in hopes of participating in reconciliation, changing one mind at

a time. I want to live by the virtues of love, courage and respect.

As Jainna puts it, we, Voices, want to help you, young people in and from care, to build your villages. We believe in independent and interdependent living. We want you to know that your life goals are worth chasing after, and there are ways to reach them. Dream- because you're worth it!



November 2021

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
		9	10 Winnipeg Ice Hockey Game 7pm	11 Remembrance Day (Voices is closed)	12	13
14	15 Voices Advisory Committee Meeting 5:30pm	16 Voices 26th Birthday Celebration 4-6pm on Zoom	17	18 Movie Night: "Lilo and Stitch" 6:30pm on Zoom	19	20
21	22	23 Cooking Club: Veggie Stew with Dumplings 4-6pm	24 Art Attack: Jewellery Making 4:30-6:30pm Scholar's Nite 5-7pm	25 Sharing Circle with Elder Louise 4:30-6:30pm	26	27
28	29	30 Voices ROx: Skwiddly Games 4:30-6:30pm	Get the recipes for Cooking Club on our website: www.voices.mb.ca/cookingclub Packages of ingredients will be provided to the first 10 folks who register. Email outreach@voices.mb.ca			

December 2021

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 
5	6	7 Cooking Club: How to Meal Prep 4-6pm on Zoom	8	9 Art Attack: Holiday Cards 4-6pm On Zoom	10	11
12	13	14 Voices ROx: Skating 4:30-6:30pm	15 Scholar's Nite 5-7pm	16 Movie Night: Nightmare Before Christmas 6:30pm on Zoom	17	18
19	20 Voices Advisory Committee Meeting 4:30pm On Zoom	21	22	23	24	25 15th Annual Voices Family Christmas Party
26	27	28 Voices is closed this week for a Winter break. We will be open on January 3rd, 2022.	29	30	31	



Call 1-866-982-4956 or email outreach@voices.mb.ca for more info or to register for activities

