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## **Changemakers Series: *The Voice* Talks To Gabriella**

Meet Gabriella, whose life was changed by an Indigenous child welfare worker. She hopes to make a similar difference in the lives of other youth in care.



We've proved what the disconnection of Indigenous people has done. I want to be part of proving what reconnection can do.

Gabriella  
Changemaker & former youth in care



## Changemaker

My name is Gabriella.

## Where

Oshawa

## The biggest challenge I have faced

My grandmother died, and my mother went down a spiral. She fell off a roof and ripped a tendon and was prescribed OxyContin and Percocet, and then Secanol, and then methadone. We got into a fight one day and I ended up breaking a glass door in my house. The cops came and put a no-contact order on me, and that's how I got into care. When I was taken into care I felt like my connection to my community was completely lost. I felt like I was at a residential school. My culture was my standing ground and my way to connect, and when I lost that I really lost myself. I hated the world, didn't want to live, was very resentful, and hated being Aboriginal. I suffered from split feather syndrome. It's a disorder where you feel unknown, you have nothing to connect with, nothing to go back on, and there's nothing that gives you an identity or a personality.

Read the full story [here](#).

## Friends and Family First: How Children's Aid Keeps Children Out of Care

Across the province Children's Aid is reducing the number of children in care. Maxine McCaulay reveals how Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society's work with

## kin is transforming the way her agency protects children.



The Kin Team at Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society (from left to right): Lynn, Lucille, Laurie, Lori-Ann, and Debbie (not pictured). Their persistence in locating kin has been instrumental in keeping more children out of care.

### **Working with kin - including relatives but also others with whom the child has a connection - when child protection concerns arise has become a growing trend among Children's Aid Societies. Why did it become a priority for your agency?**

Our philosophy is to honour the family's ability to plan for their children and not have their child be lost to them or have the child lost to their family and identity. Whenever possible, we look for kin to take a child in while the parents address their issues; mental health and addiction problems affect many of the families we serve. Placing a child with kin is in the best interests of the child.

### **How do you find potential kin?**

When we get involved with a family, one of our expectations is that workers ask the parents, "Can you identify three other supports who could be available to you in the event that you are not able to parent your children?" Sometimes parents aren't willing to provide names, but we continue to dig for that information because typically there is somebody. We use a "Family Finding" process where we bring together the parents, extended family, and community. We most often see grandparents or an aunt or uncle stepping in as caregivers. But it doesn't need to be a direct relative. One child was placed with their educational assistant as a kin option.

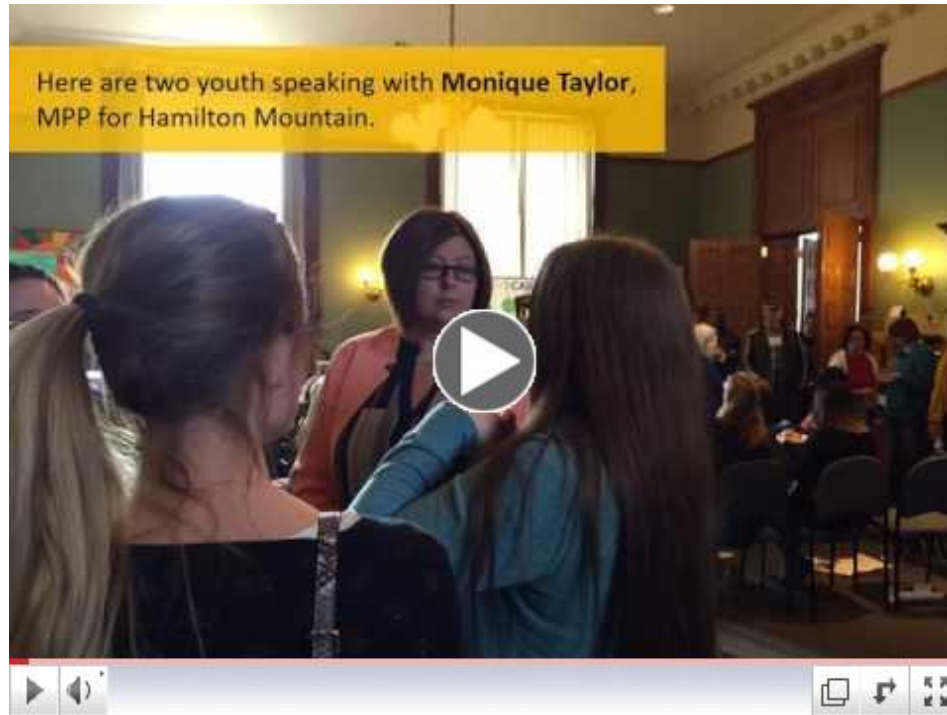
### **How do you determine whether kin will be good caregivers?**

Once potential caregivers have been found, we do a kin assessment. Because the kin become the parents, they have to demonstrate that they're able to meet the needs of the child as if they were the parent. We assess their ability to provide for the child long term. Our hope is that if the child cannot return to their biological parent, the kin will make an application for legal custody to give that child some permanency.

Read the full story [here](#).

# YouthCAN Hosts Celebration of Youth in Care at the Ontario Legislature

Over 150 youth attended Youth Civics Day at the Ontario Legislature in recognition of Children and Youth in Care Day. [Watch the video](#) to find out what their day was like.



## Resources You Can Use



### Leading expert on child welfare discusses the future of social work

UK child welfare expert Eileen Munro recently delivered a seminar discussing the future of the profession and the progress that has been made since she released her review of child welfare in 2011.

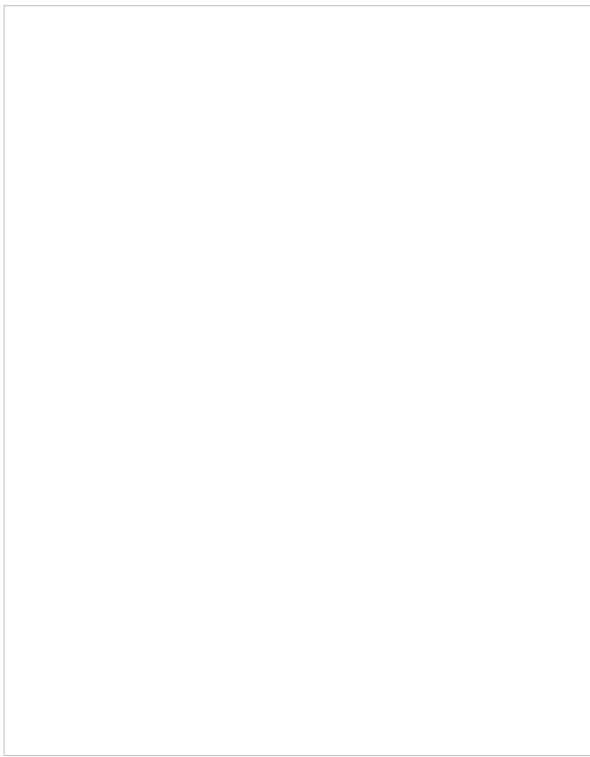
Click [here](#) to read a summary and to watch the video in full.

### releases 2016 report card

Children's Mental Health Ontario has released its second annual report card on the state of the child and youth mental health system in the province.

The report card is available in both [English](#) and [French](#).

### Children's Mental Health Ontario



## Upcoming Events

*FREE Webinar: Brotalk: A service for teen guys from Kids Help Phone.* May 26.

*Indigenous Health Conference: Towards Health & Reconciliation.* May 26-27, Toronto.

*Seeing the Light: Inuit Cultural Education for Service Providers.* June 1, Ottawa.

*OARTY 25th Anniversary Conference: Fostering Relationships.* June 1-3, Mississauga.

*Workshop: Children's Exposure to Violence.* June 3, Western University, London.

## Send Us Your News and Events!

The Voice has an extensive readership in Ontario and across Canada.

Please forward any child-welfare related news, events, or announcements to [webadmin@oacas.org](mailto:webadmin@oacas.org) for possible inclusion in our monthly newsletter.



Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

The voice of child welfare in Ontario



L'Association ontarienne des  
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