

# THE VOICE

ISSUE 25 / JUNE 2025

25  
YEARS!



**25 years of being a chosen family  
for youth in care**

On the cover: *Back:* Devonte Brownie, Summer Johnson, Nate McCarthy, Patricia Lingley

*Front:* Madeleine Slack, Sky Brochu, Brandy Warman, Shauna Crane, Destiny Corkum, Chase Falkenham, Ammy Purcell

*Cover + other inside photography: Ashley Blenkhorn // Graphic design: Lisa Neily*

# THE TEAM



CHASE



DESTINY



DEVONTE



MADELEINE



NATE



PATRICIA



SKY



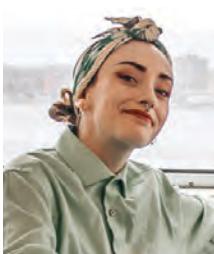
SUMMER



AMMY



BRANDY



SHAUNA



COOKIE



Left to right: Patricia Lingley, Nate McCarthy, Sky Brochu, Shauna Crane, Chase Falkenham, Destiny Corkum, Summer Johnson, Devonte Brownie, Madeleine Slack, Brandy Warman

# WHY I CAME TO THE VOICE

## Nate McCarthy

I go because it provides me with valuable opportunities to improve my voice, whether for speaking, singing, or personal growth. The program offers guidance, mentorship, and practice in a positive setting, allowing me to strengthen my abilities and connect with others who share similar goals.

## Chase Falkenham

I came to *The Voice* because I was told about it and the people here are very friendly and nice. I'm here because it gives me something to do and for the money (of course). I'm looking forward to seeing us do art and go on trips sooner or later.

## Madeline Slack

I first found out about *The Voice* one year ago. I was told that it was a place where people could be themselves without being judged. I loved the idea of having one thing in common at *The Voice*: the foster care system. Last year, *The Voice* was my rock in my ever-changing life, the one thing I knew I could look forward to each week. I've met so many amazing people through this program so there was no doubt that I was coming back. I'm sure it will be just as incredible as last year, and I can't wait to make more memories with this group.

## Devonte Brownie

I came to *The Voice* because I kind of got forced to, and also the money. I also came to *The Voice* to do something after school during the week. Now the reason that I come to *The Voice* is to have fun.

## Destiny Corkum

I was given a copy of the magazine, and started reading it in the car. I couldn't put it down. Everything I read felt like it was already in my head. I felt like I could relate so much, like I could breathe. There were other people my age who'd been through the same experience. They felt the same way, and want to spread joy and support to each other. When I read the magazine, I wanted to join as soon as I could. I was so excited to be a part of something somewhere I could go every Wednesday and have some stability, something like a family where I can make friends and create new memories. A place that was safe. That's the main thing that was going through my head. I also wanted to hear more stories of others in the same or similar experiences. Being here has been just so much more incredible than I could ever imagine.

## Summer Johnson

I first heard about *The Voice* from my aunt who asked if I was interested in going and handed me the magazine to read. I wasn't sure if I would go at first but then I heard from my friend that already went to *The Voice* that it was really good and that you make new friends my age, and we get to talk about our experiences about being in care. After what I heard about *The Voice* and read about it, I decided I wanted to go just to see if I would like it or not and when I first went, I made friends and also got to talk about my experience of being in care. Now I look forward to coming here every Wednesday and seeing my friends and having fun!

## Sky Brochu

I remember the day my social worker told me about *The Voice*, this writing program for youth in care. Honestly, I wasn't thrilled when she said I had to go. I didn't want to be part of anything, let alone something that sounded like it was for kids like me. But, well, I didn't have a choice, so I went. At first, I just sat in the back, wanting to blend in and not be noticed. But then something unexpected happened—I started meeting other teens who'd been through similar experiences. I can't even put into words how refreshing it was to talk to people who understood what I was going through. It was so different from the outside world, where it felt like no one got it. One of the best parts of *The Voice* is that I never felt judged for my feelings. I didn't have to pretend to be happy all the time or act tough. If I was sad, I could express it without feeling criticized or misunderstood. There was this weird sense of freedom in being able to be my true self, without any mask.

## Shauna Crane

It has been a little over 10 years since I first came to *The Voice* as a participant. This year is my third as a volunteer facilitator. I am so thankful for this opportunity for so many reasons, the biggest being how it has helped me to show up for myself. Seeing so many youths take charge of their lives and advocate for themselves during insurmountable circumstances that are thrown at them week after week, makes me want to grow up to be just like them. This is said with the slight cadence of a joke given how big of a kid I will always be at heart. In all seriousness though, the participants at *The Voice* remind me of my own capabilities and strengths in a way that helps me always dig a little deeper into applying myself.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Ammy Purcell

**This is a big one folks! 25 magazines. Hundreds of kids. thousands of articles. But only one goal. To give youth in care a voice.** I think I can speak for all the people who have been involved over the years, that we have definitely achieved that. For 25 years, this program has been helping youth in care in HRM find their Voice.

I am so proud of this program and how far we have come. From just a small project to give youth a little spending money, to a nationally recognized nonprofit organization. From the days of renting a "computer lab" at the Khyber Center for the Arts on Barrington Street to being able to provide youth with their own tablets to take home when needed. This program has been through it all. Changes in leadership, from Andrew Safer to Sandy Macdonald to Kaitlin Wolfe and now me. No matter who was at the helm, we stayed the course and we have been able to keep afloat through many ups and downs. Loss of funding, loss of loved ones, loss of workspaces, even loss of social interaction. But though all of this, we have done nothing but gained, respect from the community, opportunities for growth within the program, and a better understanding of how to help with youth we work with. We continue to learn and adapt to new challenges and new ways of the world every year and have shown our resilience time and time again.

25 years is a huge accomplishment! Some of us have been around since the very beginning. Our graphic designer for example, Lisa Neily, has been with us since 2003 making our magazine look more amazing every year! She is a wonderful designer and takes all of the youths' suggestions and tries to make them pop on the pages. Thank you, Lisa, for sticking with us and keeping us looking beautiful! Our Board chair Dianne Hussey, she started as a volunteer in 2002 helping with our launch celebrations and handing our pizza. Now, she still hands out pizza and launches, however she also dedicates time and passion to the board of directors making sure we are running smoothly and all of our responsibilities are taken care of. Thank you, Dianne, for all that you do!

Of course Andrew Safer is still a big part of the program. Having founded the program in 2000 he has remained a part of this group ever since. Sitting on the board, editing draft copies, even re-writing the curriculum. Andrew will always be a part of this program even all the way from Newfoundland.

I have been around for a long time as well, starting in 2001 at 14 years old, I still see the same faces every year at the launch celebration supporting us all the

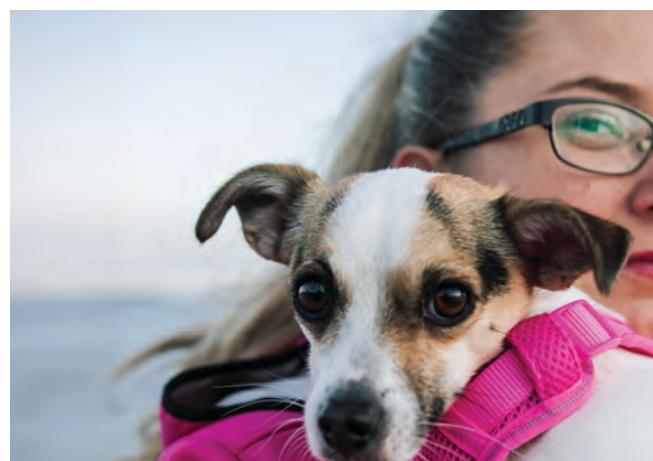
way. I won't start naming names, I don't want to age anyone, but the same people who showed me support when I was a struggling young kid are the same people I still see now almost 25 years later supporting the new generation of Voice youth.

I also see new support for this program every year, and these fresh young people are the ones I hope to still see 25 years from now showing the same support as they do now. It's true for most, once this program gets you in the feels, you never want to leave. And I am so proud of that.

Speaking of new support, I need to shout out this year's staff. Our adult volunteer, Shauna, who truly shows how much she cares about this program every single week. She brings supplies from her own art stash, she helps facilitate fun art activities that the group has a ball with, she participates in assignments even though she has a full university class schedule and works on top of that. She is a force and I know she is destined for greatness. I can't wait till she finishes her degree so we can see all the good she will do. You are awesome Shauna!

Brandy, our program facilitator, has done a wonderful job this year. She keeps the group engaged and wanting to return each week. They participate in her activities and she does a wonderful job of keeping them on track when they get a little too carried away with the sillies. I've watched her grow from a kid with very little confidence, to a grown adult who knows what she wants in life and is actively chasing it everyday. I am so proud of you Brandy!

I can't wait to see how much this program will grow in the next 5-10-or even 25 years. It is truly something amazing and I am so proud to be a part of it.



**Introducing Cookie, a foster dog from Texas, adopted by Ammy**

# PROGRAM FACILITATOR'S NOTE

**Brandy Warman**

**Another year, another group, another laugh, another new friend, and most importantly another magazine.** Words can't describe how incredibly life changing this program is for everyone involved, whether your role is working with the board, handling the running of behind-the-scenes functions, working in the leadership role of being the facilitator to being a youth in the program. It's truly a complete energy shift with the type of connections that this program offers for everyone. When you are involved in this program, you are truly loved.

Having the role of facilitator every week has been a blessing I hold dear to my heart. Working towards creating this magazine has been a passion of mine since I started my first year as a youth. It's been a complete change to my whole life. I take so much pride in being able to voice my concerns and how I feel about the foster care system. Who better to speak about the issues than the individuals affected by the system. This program made me realize my passion lies in advocating for others who are in need of a voice.

## This year's group is full of energy!

Every Wednesday you can always feel the energy and friendship that has been built in the room. It's been amazing watching this group grow and connect, and be there for them throughout the year, learning about their routines and the things that are happening in their lives.

One of the strengths that I have noticed in our group is communication with each other, and having respect for the mentors and others taking part. Developing a sense of self-awareness is a big practice that I hold within our groups and learning how to communicate freely and in a way that is respectful and can be understood clearly. As youth in the system, it's important to start building on those fundamental skills that we have lacked in extreme crises: understanding our own bodies and being able to articulate how we feel. The practice of regulation and understanding where these feelings come from help make the non-stop challenges of life seem a lot smoother.

Creativity has been a huge hit with our group as always. I think that's because we truly all have an element of creativity in our lives that is so repressed when we are depressed and burnt out from the world around us. It completely changes the chemistry of the room when we bring out an activity that requires using our creativity. Our most fun project this year was creating Valentine's Day cards with the youth and each of us getting a card from everyone. Not only did it bring the group closer together, you could see the youth being kids again.

Doing what kids should be doing: laughing, having fun and making memories that will last forever.

## Support

I would also like to say a huge thank you and I love you from the bottom of my heart to Ammy and Shauna. It's been amazing working with Ammy over the years from when I was a youth who struggled with extremely low self-esteem to being a completely functional independent woman. It's extremely shocking, the level of growth and what I have overcome throughout these years. I'm forever grateful for having the support they've shown me during those years. Offering me the job of facilitator was one of the greatest pleasures ever and will always be a very big milestone in my career, especially because it happened so early.

Working with Shauna, our adult volunteer, has been such a thrill! She is such an amazing, wonderful human who truly lights up any room she walks into. It's her care and clear passion for doing what she loves, which is learning about supporting youth. It's a big part of our program to have people who actually have firsthand foster care experience and also being someone who was a youth before in the program gives more insight into how best to handle situations with youth in the foster care system.

All of us work so well as a team because we understand the things that are most important when it comes to working with the youth in our program. I'm beyond grateful for this year's team, how well the year has gone and all the fun things we all have worked on. I look forward to another year of excitement and new adventures. We all deserve a pat on the back for the hard work we have put into this year's magazine.



**Brandy, Shauna and Ammy**

# WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME

## Devonte Brownie

Christmas to me is joyful because it is time I can spend with the people I love. Another thing I love is the presents because who doesn't love presents? The last thing I love is the FOOD!

## Sky Brochu

For a long time, Christmas wasn't something I looked forward to. In fact, it felt more like a reminder of everything I didn't have. That changed when I met Natalie, Cass, and the amazing team of people who have worked so hard to create a home for me.

I love helping with the decorations and wrapping gifts which is a whole other level of fun. Natalie knows I love the ornaments, so she lets me hang them. As I place them on the branches, I can't help but feel a warm sense of belonging. Family isn't just about blood relations; it's the connections that you form and the love that binds you together. My life was once filled with fear of fights, not having enough to eat, and being alone. With Natalie and Cass, I found a sense of security that allowed me to breathe. I've had the chance to create my own "family" with them and the rest of the team.

Gift-giving has also taken on a new meaning. When I was younger, I often felt invisible during the holidays, like I was an extra in someone else's life. Now, gift-giving is about sharing joy rather than focusing on what I'm missing. I still remember the first time I opened a present wrapped in shiny paper with a bow on top. Seeing the smiles on Natalie and Cass's faces lit up my heart. They have a knack for finding the perfect gifts, stuff that reflects my interests and makes me feel seen. It's a reminder that they know me, care about me, and want me to feel loved.

I know that Natalie, Cass, and the entire team may never fully understand the impact they've had on my life. They've given me a safe place to grow and learn without the fear that haunted me in the past. Christmas has become a season of love, warmth, and gratitude for everything I've gained and means so much more to me now—it's a time for celebration, connection, and becoming the best version of myself, thanks to the amazing people around me. No more tears over lonely days; instead, I embrace the joy that comes from my

newfound family and the holiday spirit. That's what Christmas means to me.

## Nate McCarthy

Over the Christmas break, the world seemed to slow down with snow and twinkling lights. Mornings began with the aroma of freshly boiled hot chocolate, while afternoons were filled with laughter and the warmth of family gatherings. Outside, evenings were reserved for curling up by the fire, a good book in hand or a movie, as the crackling flames added to the magic of the season. It was a time of peace, togetherness, and the perfect pause to reflect and recharge.

## Destiny Corkum

I made my snowflake like the Grinch because it was me and my sister's favourite Christmas movie. This is my first Christmas without my sisters. I wrote health, family, and joy on my snowflake because that's what Christmas meant to me, but without my sisters this year, I don't look forward to the holidays as much, especially Christmas Day, because of all the memories I have with my sisters. I really miss my sisters and would love to spend my Christmas with them. I also wrote Jesus on my snowflake because I am Christian, and the birth of Jesus means a lot to me. It is a very joyous occasion for me although I'm not so sure anymore because my beliefs have gone a couple of different ways lately. I'm hoping to get on the right track soon.



**Devonte, Patricia and Chase rolling in the dough! Making cookies at our Christmas party.**



We gathered up some Christmas magic making snowflakes.

Left to right: Shauna, Summer, Madeleine, Nate, Devonte, Chase, Brandy and Sky.

# MAGIC WAND

## Summer Johnson

If I could change something about me being in care or about my whole situation it is that before I got put into care my older brother got put into care first. The social workers only talked to my brother and not me, so I felt silenced. If I could change anything about being in care or the whole system, I would make it so every child has a voice. They should have the right to talk about what they have gone through before the system makes up their mind about what happens with the child. I know how it feels not to be able to share your home situation with the system and I can only imagine what other kids felt having their workers assume what has happened.

## Devonte Brownie

If I had a magic wand, I would use it to make all parents nice. One of the worst parts of my childhood was my dad leaving us. Another one is when our house burnt down, and we lost everything. That is why I would use my magic wand to do that.

## Destiny Corkum

If I had a magic wand, I would build social workers to have hearts to care, and to be sensitive to certain situations. I would give every kid a therapist and talk to the siblings and ask their experiences before being put into the system. I would organize foster kids to meet more often. I would have foster kids be completely aware of what funds are possible for the foster kids to access. I would have budgeting and financial awareness for the future of the foster kids and funds for school lunches for foster kids. Also, the same social workers stay with the kid they were assigned to.

## Chase Falkenham

If I had a magic wand to change the foster system, I would change the part where we often have our social worker changed. I would put in place a policy where social workers should stay for at least a year with a child in care before changing.

# REFLECTIONS

## My Future

Excerpted from *The Voice 2015*

**Shauna Crane**

At one point this year, our Newsletter group wrote about what we wanted in our future. My goal at the time was to stay alive, and sometimes it was not the easiest and I doubted my success. The wonderful people in my life were not giving up on me, at any cost. Sometimes it took tough love, sometimes it took all-nighters and many visits to the IWK. But I've made it, and it's safe to say I can finally stand on my own two feet. Slightly beaten by the winds of life, I can stand tall and proud because I am strong. I owe it to my gracious selfless foster parents for their love and support. I honestly could not thank them enough, or all of my family for that matter, including the people of the IWK Garron centre, and my wonderful family at *The Voice*. Because of these things I can start to think about and plan my future. I already have a part-time job and am focusing a balanced amount of energy on keeping myself healthy and staying positive and also succeeding in school. If I could have shown last-year-me to the future that is me now, I would have been more optimistic. My future is bright and beautiful and full of crazy adventures just waiting to happen.

## My Present

**Shauna Crane**

Reflecting on this piece brought me hesitancy at first, as it was written in the tune of what others wanted, needed and very much deserved to hear. I wrote this piece because deep down, even though it had not yet been solidified; I knew I deserved to give myself a chance at life.

I dance this dance of presentation, which many of us do. This piece touches on a live wire of emotion for me as I often want this type of delusion of false hope back. Though it never led me any closer to feeling like I had lived up to the chances I've been given in life, often it had me feeling like 7 penguins in a trench coat trying to impersonate a man which I now know is layered with internalized ableism that is ingrained in me from a world that made me feel like I had to be "cured" of my mental health to have a fulfilling life.

Trying to be something, somewhere, someone I am not, has never led me any closer to feeling like I had lived up to the chances I've been given. Often it had me

feeling like those seven penguins in a trench coat.

Meeting myself where I am at, and allowing myself to exist on my own terms has made me feel like I am truly capable of achieving purposes and fulfillment.

This is all my foster parents have ever wanted for me; I am beyond lucky to have found them at age 13 and still have them to call when I am doubting myself at 26. The unconditional love and guidance they show has helped me to break through the facade of presentation, to a place of authenticity and figure out who I am.

*Note to younger me – You little silly scene kid, those "crazy" adventures might lead you to places you could never dream. You are gonna sit at tables you would think you'd have no place at. Little miss, I'm too mentally ill to do x, y, z. You are gonna flip out when you see yourself at Dalhousie as an openly queer and disabled baddie finishing their first year in Therapeutic Recreation.*

## Reflection

**Brandy Warman**

It was the year 2017. I started writing in *The Voice*. This will be my eighth year with the program. When I started coming, I struggled a lot with depression and extreme anxiety. I was very sheltered growing up when it came to doing things on my own such as not being able to do things outside of the daylight hours for most of my high school career, and having very limited access to activities my peers were allowed to do. For the most part I felt extremely isolated from the world and struggled at making connections because I felt I've already missed out on everything being swept up in the disaster that was the dysfunction of my environment and the restrictions of the system.

My biggest perseverance toward combating this was working. I have the drive and motivation to choose better for myself and want to work toward understanding how to earn money and learn how to heal things in me. *The Voice* was one of my first jobs and taught me the importance of the real world and how things work. It gave me a sense of pride to know that I earned that check every 5 weeks for the writing that I wrote, and I was getting paid to be expressive and creative. That's why this program is so important for youth in care. Something that bothers me about the foster care system is the lack of holding our youth accountable for their actions. In this group firsthand

they learn that working and putting in effort earns you something. And choosing not to do so means you miss out on such joys as a full check. We need to prepare youth for real life things such as employment. Because eventually you will turn 25 and the system won't always be here to support you when you need it.



**Brandy circa 2017: from participant to leader!**

Working alongside Ammy has been something I'm so very grateful for, with the circumstances that I came in with, it was concerning whether I would be able to gain independence. I needed to feel comfortable within myself. But it was her support and understanding that I just needed to have, and her encouragement to really see how truly capable I was. Over the years I have become more and more confident within who I am.

I have truly achieved so much over these 7 years that it still catches me off guard how actually incredibly resilient I've become. I lived through the system that told me I would have failed and was deemed helpless. But I could not let them write me off as just that, I proved so many individuals wrong. I graduated high school with honours, went on to the NSCC for some credit upgrades, got a diploma in Child and Youth Worker, graduated with honours again, and I'm on my way to get my degree at Mount Saint Vincent University. My confidence and self-worth have changed so much over the years. I completely changed my mindset and have adapted to a new way of living after moving out of my home situation. Another thing that I've noticed about my depression is that a lot of it was the negativity around me that I was expecting from other people's perception of me, and their own mirroring of what their world looked like. Positive psychology inspired me to heal the narrative

that was truly never mine in the first place. Healing and taking care of myself this young was not an easy choice to make, but it was something that called to me. Being an expressive person is not always as easy as it seems. Years of breaking the barriers and listening to people telling you to just give up will always hurt, but the truth is it brings us closer to being a part of our authentic self.

## Opportunities

### Ammy Purcell

In the 2007 magazine, I wrote a small article called "Opportunities." I talked about how I never thought about how the program could benefit me outside of just the magazine project itself. I was so excited that having the program on my resume helped me land a job at Walmart, (where I am still working full-time almost 18 years later). When I wrote that, I had absolutely no idea how many more wonderful opportunities this program would provide later in life.

I actually took some time to go back and read most, if not all, of my articles published in the past 20 plus magazines. Man, the first few years, I was an angry, resentful teenager who just really wanted her freedom, and more money from the system. I truly had zero understanding of how the world worked and what barriers were actually there to protect me. I just wanted my life back the way it was. No rules, and money handed to me; out of guilt I suppose. As I continue reading through the years, I can see myself growing up. I can see I am understanding more about life, and responsibility and the things I need from the system to support that. I attribute so much of that growth to this program. I was given so many amazing opportunities to grow as a person and develop an idea of who I want to be in this world. I learned early on, 2008 to be exact, that it's time to step up and lead. I was given the role of "facilitator in training" that year. Now here I am 16 years later, Executive Director. I know that it sounds like a long time, but there were many ranks to climb in between. And the years seem to fly by faster than any of us like to admit.

For all of our youth who come through the program, there are so many doors we can help open. So many ways we can help support you through this crazy world. Whether it be in school, getting self-development credits, having your experience with us on a resume and helping with interview skills to land your first job, or just a like-minded group of friends to help get you through the tough times. The opportunities are there for you, and so is *The Voice*!

# MESSAGES FROM THE BOARD

## **Andrew Safer, Founder and Board Director**

Ever since I retired as executive director and went on the board—16 years ago—I have loved seeing Youth Voices mature, keeping to its original mandate to support youth in care while growing with the times. It's a unique organization that's tightly knit and forward looking, always keeping the youth in the foreground. It's been an honour to be part of this evolution!

### **A bit about the history...**

In the late 1990s, I conducted some workshops on communication and dealing with emotions with parents and their teens for Children's Aid Society of Halifax. Soon after, Barrie MacFarlane, supervisor for children in care, invited me in for a chat. The Youth Employability Project had funds to support a project for youth in care, so we brainstormed the Newsletter Project, agreeing that the best thing would be to give youth in care a voice, hence the name: Youth Voices, and *The Voice* for the newsletter. I developed the curriculum and our first group met in 2000. Ammy Purcell, who is now the executive director, started with the second group in 2001, at age 14... And the rest is history!

## **Dianne Hussey, Chair of the Board**

Since 2002, It's been my honour and privilege to be a volunteer with this remarkable program for youth in care. I have witnessed so many of our young adults grow and thrive over their years of participation, even despite the many challenges they have faced.

All of us who volunteer on the Board of Directors continue to be inspired by their honesty, creativity and compassion for each other. They teach us so much about what is important, and it's a pleasure to continue to witness the growth in both their writing and their life skills.

Another true testament to the value of *The Voice* has been the unwavering support from so many foster families and the wonderful funders that you will see highlighted in these pages. We are also very grateful to the youth volunteers, many of whom are alumni of the program, who play such an important role in keeping this wonderful initiative going strong.

On behalf of the Board, we are beyond proud to celebrate the special group of young people currently enrolled in the program, as well as their achievements, in our 25th Anniversary Edition! It truly does take a village.

## **Gil McMullin, Board Director**

I have been a supporter and promoter of the YVNS from the early days of the Program, as a staff member at the former Children's Aid Society of Halifax and Department of Community Services. It has been my privilege to remain connected to the Program as a member of the Board, after retiring from DCS.

Every year I have been inspired by the youth participants who demonstrate such strength, commitment and insight as they work collaboratively to produce another quality newsletter. Cheers to these fine young writers, and to the adult facilitators, under whose supportive guidance such a product is possible.

## **Ann Jennex-Roberts, Board Treasurer**

As a foster parent, I started with *The Voice* 24 years ago when one of my children took part in this amazing program. Since then, I have had multiple children joining in this inspiring group. Then, in later years, I was approached to become one of the Board of Directors. What an honour and here I am.

## **Jonathan King, Board Member**

I became a board member of Youth Voices of Nova Scotia in 2020 (I think). I heard about the program from my good friend, current chair Dianne. As someone who enjoys writing and believes strongly in programs that promote and enhance writing and communication skills, I am pleased to be on a board with such a dedicated team.

## **THE YOUTH VOICES OF NOVA SCOTIA BOARD MEMBERS: (photo on next page)...**

**Ammy Purcell, Ashley Blenkhorn, Gil McMullin, Dianne Hussey, Joanthan King, Andrew Safer, Olivia Macdonald, Anne Jennex-Roberts.** 

# SOCIAL WORKERS

## Nate McCarthy

My social worker is one of the kindest and most supportive people I know. They always listen to me with patience and understanding.

## Destiny Corkum

I'm feeling really alone and unsupported by my social worker. She was told by the court to organize visits with me and my sisters, and she has yet to do so and has not followed up or down on her job. She does not listen to me, or any of my needs and cancels appointments of mine behind my back. She is new to this area. She's from Toronto. She's also new to being a social worker. I kind of miss my old social worker who has been removed from the case. She listened eventually when I pestered her enough.

## Devonte Brownie

This week I saw my social worker and the moment I saw her I started acting grumpy towards her. We got in her car, and I flipped out on her and we argued all the way to KFC but then we stopped and ate. We left and went home while listening to "Not Like Us" by Kendrick Lamar on the radio.

## Chase Falkenham

I like my social worker. This is my third or fourth social worker now. It's kind of crazy how many times you are gonna get new workers. every month? Okay, maybe not every month, but still, I like my current worker. I just hope this worker stays.

## Patricia Lingley

She is a very hard worker, and she's one of the social workers that actually cares and is always meeting my needs. She is always making sure I make it to any of my appointments and other stuff such as concerts, after school activities, etc.

If it wasn't for her support, I wouldn't be the person I am today. I truly appreciate her so much and always have. Thanks for everything.





Devonte, Chase, Nate the three musketeers



Behind the scenes: working hard and hardly working.

# POETRY/FREE WRITES

**Destiny Corkum**

The city wakes, a muted hum  
As dawn paints skies, a gentle drum  
The fog hangs low, a misty veil  
Across the harbour, a windswept sail

The streets are calm, a quiet grace  
A new day dawns on this place  
The ocean breaths a salty sigh  
Beneath the sun, the clouds drift by.

## Dear future me

**Sky Brochu**

I wanted to say that things get better. You may be struggling right now but if you keep trying and working on it then it gets easier. I want you to know that you are not alone in your struggle, and you have people in your life to help you so please don't push them all away. Some people may leave all the time but sometimes it's not your fault; not everyone is meant to stay. People come and go in and out of your life but remember that it is up to you to choose who is worth keeping and who is worth letting go.

I had a lot of shit thrown at me and things that wanted to break you down and tell you you're not enough but if you're reading this you're still breathing and that's a start. We have lots to deal with but I'm telling you that we will get through this. It may just take lots of time and patience. I hope we are in good health, and we find out what I can do to not be in the hospital all the time.

## Arachnophobia

**Chase Falkenham**

Everyday, every night, I always feared a creature that has eight legs and four pairs of eyes, crawling towards me with malicious intent to either poison me, or to use me as a nest for its babies when they are born, or to infect me and to mutate me and become one of these "Spiders", as they call them. Every time I see one of them, I always have the instinct to just crush them to death, or to just flush them down my toilet. If it's only me that is afraid of these "Spiders" or if it's multiple people that have this fear too, until I can stand up and face my fears, I'm a man stuck with Arachnophobia.

## My Words Inspire Change

**Sky Brochu**

My words are seeds in barren ground,  
a whisper soft, yet strong and sound.  
They spark a thought; they light a flame.  
No voice too small to shift the frame.  
Yet shadows whisper, doubt takes hold,  
a cave of fear, its walls ice-cold.  
But deep inside, beyond the pain,  
Lies the treasure I shall claim.  
The path is dark, the steps unclear,  
but truth is born from facing fear.  
Through trembling hands and weary mind,  
I seek, I share, the light I find.  
With every word, a path is made,  
through silence, fear, and walls that fade.  
I write, I stand, I speak. I say,  
"My words inspire change today."

## Scopophobia

**Chase Falkenham**

Everywhere I go, I feel a sense of dread, a feeling of being watched everywhere I go. Whether it's a walk to the park, going to the store, hanging out with my friends, or going to a restaurant, the feeling of being watched by an invisible pair of eyes still makes me feel dreadful to every place I'm at, it's there, the pair of eyes, watching from afar...



# RELATABLE SONG

## Summer Johnson

The song that relates to being in care for me is the song “Hard 2 Face Reality” by Poo Bear featuring Justin Bieber”. It is relatable because, in Justin Bieber’s verse it says, “I know it’s hard away from home, and it ain’t easy all alone”. I remember when I first got placed into care. It really was hard away from home, and I really did feel alone because I didn’t know anyone so I didn’t know who I could go to. Also in the song it says “relationships over the phone” and when I got placed into care, I was dating this guy and being away from home and in a long distance relationship was hard for me, so it was hard to face reality because I just wanted everything to go back to the away it was before. I kept imagining it that way, but deep down I knew things were never going to be the same. So sometimes it’s hard 2 face reality.

The relatable part of the song:

*Don't be afraid to stand alone  
Don't be afraid to stand outside the door alone  
I know it's hard to work from home  
And it ain't easy all alone  
Relationships over the phone  
Talking to your significant other all night long  
Sometimes it's hard to face reality.*

## Destiny Corkum

A song I chose that I felt represented my time in foster care would be “Older” by Alec Benjamin. I relate to the song because I feel I grew up too fast and life is moving on, but I’m not ready.

I really see how time speeds up and I feel the lyrics “I’m not ready to get older”

“I tell my friends I’ll see them next October, that’s my closest thing to closure” is very relatable in my concept of myself needing closure.

“Guess my childhood is over now I’m packing up my posters” feels like another line that I closely relate to, feeling like I’ve grown up too much and have too much responsibility on my plate.

## Chase Falkenham

The song that I chose is called “Fade to Black” by Metallica. This song relates to me because my dad used to play it when my mom passed. The lyrics that hit me most is “Life it seems will fade away, drifting further every day, getting lost within myself, nothing matters, no one else”. These were chosen because I feel disconnected from my family completely and the line “Nothing matters, no one else” is describing the part where my other family members have gone crazy.

## Devonte Brownie

I like the song “Love is Gone” by Slander and Dylan Matthew” because a lot of bad S!@# happened in my life. I listened to this song so much when my mom passed away, and it helped. I always listen to this song when I need a happy booster, and it helps. This is and will forever be my favourite song!

## Shauna Marie

I chose the song “All My Life” by Lil Durk & J Cole because it reminds me of many intersections of my own lived experience, as well as people I love and respect who exist outside of the narrative written for them within the margins placed. It reminds me of how grateful I am to have had the chances to change my own narrative, and opportunities to lead by example.

*I'm The Voice, but the system ain't givin' me a choice  
Know some people that's still on deploy  
I know a felon who tryna get FOID  
Child support your only support  
For a visit, I'm goin' through courts  
Went to jail, they was chainin' me up  
And you know that I'm famous as fuck  
See how you gon' joke about stimulus?  
But they really had came in the clutch  
I know some kids wanna hurt they self  
Stop tryna take drugs, I refer to myself  
Tryna better myself, tryna better my health*

## Noah McCarthy

Tom Macdonald is my favourite artist. My favourite song is “The System” because it’s true feelings, I can relate to how he feels. The other one I like by him is “Don’t Look Down” because of the good beats. Tom Macdonald is a great artist.

# THANK YOU



HALIFAX  
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FOUNDATION

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# THE VOICE LAUNCH 2024

