From the Editor

The 2021 issue of the Canadian Journal of Children's Rights addresses a pressing concern in a precarious time; namely, children's civil and political rights in a time of pandemic. Over the past year, children and young people in Canada and around the world have lived through what has been an unprecedented health situation; in Canada, we are also living through the traumatic uncovering of the remains of children who lost their lives while attending residential schools. These marked moments bring ideas about children's rights into stark relief. It has been a time marked by relationships resting on unsteady ground, and routines and movements that have been abruptly interrupted and rearranged with uneven, and sometimes devastating, effects. Without a doubt, the pandemic and news of the residential school children have changed people's lives structurally, physically, emotionally and psychologically.

For those of us who design the interventions, programs, research and policies to respond to such situations, and those who are adult decisions-makers working on behalf of children as caregivers, teachers, health care professionals, advocates, and policymakers, among others, this time presents an opportunity to reflect on how our actions intensify and affect the ways children's civil and political rights are respected and upheld. For the contributors to this issue, their accounts reflect how they perceive this incredible time as they consider what the implications are of the actions of adult decision-makers for the realisation or curtailing of the civil and political rights of children. They question whether and how children's rights have been upheld in decisions made on their behalf throughout the pandemic, for instance, and how children have lived through and experienced these decisions that necessarily involve their hearts, minds and bodies. Each contribution reflects particular positionalities according to gender, age, race, ability, class, locality and sexuality as well as disciplinary locations. Another thread that weaves through the contributions in this issue is the urgency to consider and assess the implications of the isolation, fear of disease, miscommunication, lack of spaces to play, and implementation of policies made largely without the input of children and young people themselves throughout the pandemic.

To complement the words of authors to convey the richness and complexity of these concerns, the issue features the work of artists who capture ideas about the abrogation of children's rights in contexts of families, education, labour, poverty and gender-based violence and how these lock together as systems of inequalities and exclusion. Taken together, the words and images the contributors offer in this issue thoughtfully and critically consider what has happened during the pandemic to the civil and political rights of children with an understanding that there is much at stake in this globalizing world. When adult decision-makers and children's rights allies work in the best interests of children, it can sometimes lead to both positive effects on one hand, as well as deleterious consequences for actual children's lives, on the other.

To be sure, the pandemic has done more than resurface tensions and contradictions in young lives that existed prior to the pandemic; it has made clear that their civil and political rights are intertwined with the contexts and relationships in which they live alongside adults through a powerful intersectional matrix of identity, power and locality. This entanglement brings our attention to children's and young people's lives in compelling ways, for what the pandemic has shown us more vividly than before, is the importance of the presence, and not merely the future, of children, the integral role of human rights, and the centrality of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a living document that guides our attention to the powerful ways structural inequalities and political and institutional systems place limitations and/or barriers on people's abilities to live their lives fully. For those of us who interact with, advocate for, study and work with children and young people, the pandemic has underscored the importance and urgency with which to consider what Bronwyn Davies (2019, p. 37) calls the "process wherein children and young people resist, challenge, indulge and transgress gendered ways of becoming through their inter-and intra-actions with human (e.g. peers, parents, educators), non-human (e.g. material, animal) and the more-than-human (e.g. computers)." Indeed, the pandemic has illuminated children's civil and political rights in at least two important ways: first, that children's rights can be understood only as part of a wider assemblage that includes human, material, non-human and more-than-human interdependence, and second, that children and young people live in a world characterized by an increasing instability of time and fracturing of lived space. The

pandemic has brought forward these shifts and changes in a profound way that demands of all of us an equally profound response. Girlhood scholar Shenila Khoja-Moolji (2017) suggests that what is required in our responses is a recognition of an ethic of interdependency and alliance that sees children as actively engaged social actors and as part of a shared humanity marked by interdependence across all forms of living.

The contributors to this issue contemplate the civil and political rights of children and young people in a time of pandemic by offering their reflections, suggestions, concerns and critiques. The issue begins with the Hon. Landon Pearson's 2021 National Child Day reflections on the trajectory of the history of children's rights taking into account major milestones as well as watershed moments including the 9/11 attacks. She reflects on the importance of this event, commenting on what it meant for advocacy and children's rights moving forward. It is apropos to include her National Child Day speech here as we live through another watershed moment for children's rights during this pandemic.

Sarah Ciotti, Shannon Moore, Maureen Connolly and Trent Newmeyer follow with their article titled "Roots, Rights and Risk: Canada, Childhood and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic." They report on their study of the ways the media circulates pandemic-related messages to argue that COVID-19 has had discriminatory, exclusionary and economically and socially devastating effects on children despite the protections offered by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in countries including Canada. The authors report evidence indicating that children's rights discourses were erased in Canadian media reporting during the pandemic in ways that suggest that children should be seen and not heard. In the next article, Yolanda Corona Caraveo, Carlos Pérez y Zavala and Sergio Navarro-Montalvo's article takes the reader to Mexico in their piece titled "Invisible Childhoods." Corona Caraveo and her colleagues consider the impact of the COVID-19 situation there for the civil and political rights of children making the point that children remain invisible in the ways government has addressed the pandemic and why attention to experiences of isolation, lack of play spaces and loss of what little public spaces for children is so urgently needed.

While the role of media and government responses to COVID-19 offer unique insights in how the pandemic has affected the civil and political rights of children in a

time of pandemic, Natasha Blanchet-Cohen, Geneviève Grégoire-Labrecque and Amy Cooper demonstrate how the pandemic has necessitated a re-evaluation and reconsideration of the work they do with, and on behalf of, young people. Their contribution reports on a research collaboration between university and community partners in human rights education in their article titled “The Pandemic is Galvanizing Change: Anti-Racism in Human Rights Education with Youth.” The authors reflect on their own human rights education practice and consider ways to engage more critically and intentionally in the work they do by attending to anti-racism and racial justice work. They recognize the interdependence of participation rights and systemic racism and discrimination and look for ways to re-design their programs for young people that reflect a critical and decolonial approach. Next in the issue is a contribution by Sara Camponovo who discusses the importance for children of free play away from the surveillance of adults by drawing on data from her research project on children’s play in school settings. Camponovo considers the tension in contemplating both benefits and challenges of institutional practices that free children to play on one hand, but restrict on the other.

In the open section of the journal you will find excellent discussion and demonstrative pieces. In this issue, we have a piece by Dr. Louise Chawla contemplating a new discussion paper from UNICEF called “The Necessity of Urban Green Space for Children’s Optimal Development” written by Suchitra Sugar. Dr. Chawla, who is a Professor Emerita in the Program in Environmental Design at the University of Colorado Boulder, focuses her research on participatory planning, practices and design with young people and offers an insightful and critical discussion of the UNICEF paper. The section also includes a critique by Sydney Chapados of the Ontario government’s education policies during COVID-19 for school children that were designed and implemented largely without their participation. Following this discussion, Elena Gallitto, Patrick Ladouceur and Seyda Nur Celebi call for better oversight of children’s rights in Canada by reissuing the call heard at the conclusion of the 1979 International Year of the Child for a national children’s commissioner. To close this section, we are pleased to feature several provocative political cartoons on the theme of children’s rights from a group of international artists who submitted their work to the 2020 edition of *Images of Justice*, a

yearly satirical cartoon series. Our thanks to organizer and curator of the exhibit, Dr. Omid Milani of the University of Ottawa's Human Rights Research and Education Centre for this collaboration.

The contributions in the youth section complement and extend the writing in the academic and open sections including a description of a pandemic inspired initiative designed and implemented by Reah Shin and her colleagues who are graduate students in the Child and Youth Care program at Ryerson University. They report on their initiative *Youth First* that assisted young people in remaining connected during the pandemic. This section also features the winning undergraduate and graduate children's rights essays by Cathy Broussard and Isabelle Lefebvre submitted to the 2021 essay contest hosted by the Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory on the Rights of the Child at the University of Ottawa.

Three special announcements close the issue. First is to announce that in collaboration with Families Canada, a blog version of select articles in our current and previous journals will be made available several times throughout the year. Our thanks and appreciation to Bushra Rahman and Rebecca Balcerzak, Families Canada, who will prepare the blog entries for an extended audience. The blog versions of the articles will be posted on both the Families Canada website (www.familiescanada.ca) as well as on the Landon Pearson Centre website at Carleton.

Finally, we are thrilled to announce new awards established this year to support students. The Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights established these awards for undergraduate and graduate students studying children's rights. The Dr. Joy Calkin awards are funded through the generous support of The Muttart Family Foundation. Landon Pearson transformed a 90th birthday gift from the Foundation into three annual awards; one award will be made each year to support an Indigenous student. In addition to these awards, the Landon Pearson Centre is honoured to announce two annual essay awards named for Francine Lansdown and her mother Gerison Lansdown, international children's rights advocate and long time member and supporter of the Centre's Child Rights Academic Network

(www.carleton.ca/landonpearsoncentre/cran). For more information on the awards and prizes, including how to apply, please visit the Landon Pearson Centre website (www.carleton.ca/landonpearsoncentre).

In closing, Landon Pearson and I wish to thank the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation for providing financial support for the Journal as well as Patricia Moore, Scholarly Communications Librarian and Open Journal Systems research specialist at Carleton's MacOdrum Library, for her continuing technical support. We appreciate the expertise and assistance of our dedicated reviewers in ensuring the Journal produces a high quality issue each year. To our readers, we extend our appreciation and gratitude to all of you for your interest and support of the Canadian Journal of Children's Rights. Finally, a special thank you to Mashal Bandukwala, our youth artist, whose artwork graces the cover of this issue. Mashal submitted the image to the Landon Pearson Centre's COVID-19 art contest and we are very pleased to reproduce it here with Mashal's permission.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the Journal and look forward to next year's edition that will focus on young people's activism in the context of systems of discrimination and exclusion.

Virginia Caputo, PhD

Managing Editor

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