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**Media Release**

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**Recognize National Child Day with Our Kids Network**

**This year's focus is understanding and encouraging a child's right to participate**

Halton Region, Ontario – Each year on November 20, Canadians mark National Child Day – a time to recognize that each child in Canada and around the world has basic rights that allow them to survive and thrive.

In Halton, [Our Kids Network](#) (OKN) marks the day with a reminder that people of all ages play a role in helping children and youth grow to meet their full potential. OKN is a Halton-wide partnership of agencies and organizations serving children, youth, and their families.

National Child Day marks Canada's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1959, and the UN adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. The convention has 54 articles that cover rights that all children everywhere are entitled to.

Covered in those articles, and the theme of this year's National Child Day, is the right to participate. Elisabeth Wells, OKN Interim Executive Director, explained how important it is for children and youth to contribute to and feel involved in their families, schools, and communities.

"When we think about participation, we may think about a young child's right to be part of school and neighbourhood activities, or a teenager's right to participate in decisions that affect them. Whenever we show young people that they are welcome in a space or in a conversation, and that their contributions are essential and valuable, we are helping them develop self-worth and confidence."

**Studying youth engagement**

In 2021, Our Kids Network heard from Halton youth about their engagement in the community, as part of the Halton Youth Impact Survey.

[Results related to how local youth engage in caring for their communities](#) showed that:

- Almost four in 10 Halton youth volunteer or serve their communities without pay regularly.
- In Halton Hills and Milton, a higher percentage of children and youth engaged in two or more civic activities in the past year, compared to their peers in Burlington and Oakville.
- Children and youth have ideas and suggestions, such as adding social justice as a mandatory high school course, and offering transportation to social activities where public transportation is not available.

“Kids have the right to gather information and tell us what they think,” Wells said. “And adults owe it to them to listen and take them seriously. We learned from our survey that collectively we can engage even more youth in environmental, civic, and other community activities. Not only engage them, in fact, but have them serve as leaders for causes they care about.”

### **Considering Indigenous perspectives**

Wells also pointed out that National Child Day provides an opportunity to consider the experiences of Indigenous children and youth in Canada. Since October 2021, OKN has been offering the [“4 Seasons of Reconciliation” course](#) to professionals who work within OKN’s network of partner organizations.

“Our Kids Network is uniquely positioned to reach and collaborate with organizations and professionals across Halton in a shared and strong commitment to Truth and Reconciliation,” she said.

Angela Bellegarde, OKN’s Indigenous Strategy Manager said that the self-paced, multi-media course provides basic knowledge of Truth and Reconciliation, including the legacy of Residential Schools, as well as the valuable contributions of Indigenous Peoples.

“We’re helping to ensure that Halton professionals who work with children and youth have shared understanding and knowledge of the Truth. This takes us further down the road to a renewed and deeper relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals and communities.”

### **National Child Day learning resources**

UNICEF Canada’s National Child Day resources are available for professionals and families at [unicef.ca](https://www.unicef.ca), including a [poster](#) that lists the rights outlined in the UN Convention in child-friendly language.

For more information about OKN, visit [ourkidsnetwork.ca](https://ourkidsnetwork.ca).

Read the [National Child Day Blog](#).