



Kelly MacDonald: Working *with* Remarkable Young People

Kelly A. MacDonald, BA, LLB, LLM, has been practising law for 14 years.

She has provided legal advice to provincial and national First Nations organizations and is a senior adjudicator for the national residential schools alternative dispute resolution process.

“I am an Aboriginal lawyer of Haida/Tsimshian and Scottish heritage,” says Kelly. “I obtained a Master’s in Law in 2000, in the area of First Nations child welfare. Professor Bob Reid, a good friend and mentor, was my thesis advisor.”

A single mother with an 11-year-old daughter, Kelly is involved in youth advocacy. In an article in the *Victoria Times Colonist*, February 28, 2005, journalist Judith Lavoie reported that “more than 45 per cent of the approximately 10,000 children in the care of the province are Aboriginal, but First Nations represent only 8 per cent of the population.” That topic was part of Kelly’s Master’s thesis.

Chosen from approximately 98 applicants, Kelly was recently appointed

to her current position—BC’s first Deputy Child & Youth Officer (Aboriginal Services) —as a result of a historic agreement between the Child & Youth Officer (Jane Morley, QC) and the four provincial Aboriginal Political organizations (First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Métis Provincial Council of BC, and the United Native Nations).

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The mandate of the Deputy Child and Youth Officer is to “support, observe, and advise.” In effect, Kelly serves as an ombudsman for Aboriginal children, youth, communities, and families and as liaison to Aboriginal peoples and government.

“I am truly excited about this new position and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal children, youth, and families. I feel

passionate about making a positive contribution for Aboriginal peoples and am motivated by the contributions and work of my ancestors. My reward is getting to work with, and on behalf of, some remarkable young people. They have such great hope and optimism.”

Kelly is working hard on improving relationships between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples. She hopes that “by working respectfully with representatives of government, I can lead by example.” ▲



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