

FOR RELEASE
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Five outstanding Yukon youth recognized in awards ceremony

WHITEHORSE—Yukon Commissioner Doug Phillips and Deputy Premier Elaine Taylor today presented the Outstanding Youth Achievement Award (OYAA) to five young Yukoners. Brandon Butler, Monica Johnson, Kwasen Reid, Gordon Rhys Watson and Asia Winter-Sinnott were selected for the award for exceptional contributions to their communities.

"This year's award winners are great ambassadors and positive examples for youth across Yukon," Phillips said.

Each recipient receives territory-wide recognition on an individualized poster, a \$250 cash prize and a formal award presented by the commissioner of Yukon. The Outstanding Youth Achievement Awards are a partnership between the Office of the Commissioner and the Government of Yukon's Youth Directorate.

"The outstanding community involvement, leadership skills and creativity shown by these young people is an inspiration to all Yukoners, young and old," Taylor said. "This year's winners are leaders and role models with bright futures ahead of them."

Anyone can nominate a youth aged 15 to 20 for the Outstanding Youth Achievement Award. The Yukon government's Youth Directorate selects winners, with an emphasis on recognizing youth involved in Yukon communities in constructive ways. This can include volunteering, fundraising, helping seniors and Elders, or any activity that creates positive change.

Learn more:

Outstanding Youth Achievement Awards

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See backgrounder.

Contact:

Michael Edwards
Cabinet Communications
867-633-7910
michael.edwards@gov.yk.ca

Kate Durand
Communications, Executive Council Office
867-667-8968
kate.durand@gov.yk.ca

2016 Outstanding Youth Achievement Award recipients

Brandon Butler

Brandon (15) was selected for his selfless contributions to the Whitehorse judo and music communities. In addition to his own training hours, he volunteers his time to coach juniors at the Northern Lights Judo Club. He also volunteers at local tournaments and demonstrations. He currently has his brown belt in judo and is training to receive a black belt. He has represented Yukon at Western Canada Games and nationals.

Brandon developed a passion for music at a young age, starting with piano lessons at age five. When he was 12, he started a rock band called The Butler Code where he starred as the drummer. He was awarded the All City Band's Most Improved Junior Concert Band Member of 2015/16. He recently performed at the Atlin Music Festival with his current heavy metal band Warrmauth. Brandon is dedicated and works hard to share his passion for judo and music with others.

Monica Johnson

Monica (17) was recognized for her pride in her community and the leadership role she plays in inspiring youth and children to maintain healthy and active lifestyles. She is known as a community builder, supporter and activator. Monica attends every Kluane First Nation General Assembly with a positive attitude. She believes in the traditional culture of her ancestors and encourages children and youth to learn about their heritage. She has a passion for hockey and with her abilities and perseverance has represented Yukon, the North and Indigenous peoples at a local and national level. Monica has dedicated many hours to volunteering in her community, mentoring youth and sharing her passion for sports.

Kwasen Reid and Asia Winter-Sinnott

Kwasen (15) and Asia (17) were selected for their impressive leadership skills. They are engaged in social justice issues and are known for taking initiative by starting and running a positive group for female youth in Mayo. They noticed younger girls in high school having a tough time and wanted to give them a safe space to share and to pass along knowledge. In their girls group, they cover topics such as substance abuse, the importance of dreams, healthy relationships, consent and sexual health. Kwasen and Asia have organized charity projects, like Period Packs, with the girls group. Kwasen and Asia have had a positive impact on their peers and contributed greatly to improving the well-being of youth in Mayo.

Gordon Rhys Watson

Rhys (15) was recognized for his willingness to volunteer his time to a wide range of activities that benefit his community. He participates in group fundraising events with Cadets, the All City Band, the Church of the Northern Apostles, Aboriginal groups and more. Rhys works tirelessly with many organizations to help promote citizenship, volunteering and helping one another. Several of his articles have been published in national magazines, including Hemophilia Today as well as the Army Cadet League of Canada's On Track. He helps mentor children with hemophilia including teaching them how to self-administer their medication to prevent pain or injuries. He is the youngest Canadian to take Indigenous Catechist training to work more closely with Aboriginal communities. In all his activities, Rhys demonstrates leadership, a positive attitude, strong citizenship and is always willing to help others.

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