

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada Award for Distinguished Social Work Practice Protecting the Rights of Children is co-sponsored by BCASW and the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada. It will be presented during BC Social Work Week (March 13-19), in recognition of contributions to improving children's lives. The social worker, who must be a member of the BCASW, will have practised approximately 5–10 years post social work degree. The nomination may be submitted by any person with knowledge of the nominee's social work practice and will specify the aspects of Dr. Janusz Korczak's philosophy that relate to the nominee's practice of social work. The nominee's practice must demonstrate respect for the child, foster skills that lead to healthy independence, promote self-determination, promote and protect human rights, and engage in collaborative practice with the child. Nominations are due by February 1, 2022. The award consists of a certificate and \$500.00, provided by the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada and funded by Haidy and Charles Kux-Kardos, in memory of Charles' father, Arpad Langfelder and his brother Isti.



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WORDS | **JERRY NUSSBAUM**

This award is granted to a British Columbian social worker in recognition of their contributions to improving children's lives and well-being in ways that reflect the

philosophy of Dr. Janusz Korczak. The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada recognizes social workers as worthy carriers of Dr. Korczak's legacy, in that they work directly with children, having the opportunity to put Dr. Korczak's beliefs into daily practice.

Dr. Korczak was one of the moral heroes of the 20th century, a pioneer in child advocacy and a world-wide symbol of commitment to the welfare of children and youth. He was the living embodiment of a holistic approach: he was a pediatrician, researcher, author, and a broadcaster; he was a trailblazer in the field of children's rights.


His writings form the basis of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Notably for us, for decades he was also an orphanage director, where he put his revolutionary pedagogical philosophy into practice. His orphanage, to which he dedicated 30 years of his life, offered a democratic society for children and youth, with its own parliament and court, and its own newspaper where children could freely express their views. Although the Children's Republic that he nurtured at his orphanages perished with him and his children at the hands of the Nazis in 1942, we believe that his philosophy and practice have an important role to play in confronting the challenges we face today.

Central in Korczak philosophy was a respect for the dignity of each child and their ability to play a role in determining their own outcomes. The rules at the Children's Republic were set by the children and for the children. There was no domination, no discrimination. Where our current system, even if we grant that

it is well-meaning, imposes judgment on children, Dr. Korczak believed in their full participation. Although he was a father figure to hundreds, he was not paternalistic but empowered children and believed in respecting the child as a foundational principle.

Dr. Korczak approached children with respect and love, dignity and equality. Dr. Korczak's goal was to engage the children in a dialogue, finding a common language and understanding of how children experience adults, and on the other hand, to comprehend adults' views of children. Dr. Korczak possessed a unique gift of seeing the world from the child's perspective.

Dr. Korczak's ground-breaking philosophy of children's rights had at its core the values of democracy and community, both in principle and in practice. Dr. Korczak considered children as partners, equal to adults as human beings. He insisted that there could be no human rights without children's rights. Dr. Korczak placed respect for the child at the heart of his vision and sought to empower children and give them a voice in their own fate in a way that can serve as a beacon that can guide us toward what is possible. Dr. Korczak's legacy has never been more relevant than it is today.

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada strives for the dissemination of knowledge about Dr. Korczak's work and ideas in order to better integrate it into contemporary legal, social, and pedagogical theories and practices, and to make it the basis for cooperation among educators, child welfare workers, researchers, physicians, lawyers, and children's rights activists. The awards we sponsor aim to recognize those whose contributions reflect Dr. Korczak's legacy and give it life in the 21st century. 

Jerry Nussbaum is the President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada