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## **First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition Minutes of February 9, 2011 BC Teachers' Federation Building**

### **In attendance:**

Michael McCarthy Flynn – First Call  
Jean Moore – Canadian Mental Health Association  
Angie Osachoff – Equitas  
Dawn Johnson – Ministry for Children and Family Development  
Tarah Samuels – Aboriginal Youth Internship Program, MCFD  
Jocelyn Helland – Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks  
Lorena Pilgrim – Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks  
Jessy Auger – Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks  
Jeremy Vis – BC Association for Community Living  
Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond – Representative for Children and Youth  
Mike Clarke – BCGEU  
Andrina Perry – First Call  
Carol Matusicky – Burnaby Board of Trade  
Agata Feetham – Gordon Neighbourhood House  
Megan Yarema – Canada Without Poverty  
Lanny Libby – City of Vancouver Social Policy  
Vanessa Kay – City of Vancouver Social Policy  
Elizabeth Saewyc – McCreary Centre Society  
Judith Koltai Peavy  
Adrienne Montani – First Call  
Ian Mass – Pacific Community Resources Society  
Fred Milowsky – Office of the Representative for Children and Youth  
Jordana Bullard – Big Sisters of BC  
Kris Courchene – Western Society for Children  
Bill Preston – BC School Trustees Association

JoAnn Lauber – BC Retired Teachers Association  
Jason Chan – SUCCESS  
Kim Thomson – UBC  
Ed Berry – Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks  
Sonya Pighin – Office of the Representative for Children and Youth  
Mae Burrows – Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy Committee  
Helesia Luke – BC Society for Public Education  
Ian Boyko – Canadian Federation of Students-BC  
Naznin Dhanani – ELSA Net  
Tracey Young – BC Association of Social Workers  
Clara Rutter – Society for Children and Youth  
Grand Chief Stewart Phillip – Union of BC Indian Chiefs  
Andrea Glickman – Union of BC Indian Chiefs  
Steve Kerstetter – First Call  
Tina Tam – Society for Children and Youth  
Steve Bailey – BC Retired Teachers Association

### **On phone:**

Cindy Jamieson – Aboriginal Supported Child Development  
Georgia Peters – CASA for Children of Greater Victoria  
Michael Goldberg

### **Regrets:**

Kelly Read – Office of Mable Elmore, MLA  
Melissa McDowell – AMSSA  
Linda Korbin – BC Association of Social Workers  
James Chamberlain – BC Teachers' Federation

## **1. Introductions**

Chair Helesia Luke opened the meeting, and there was a round of introductions.

## **2. First Call Reports and Updates**

### **Party Leadership Candidates Questionnaire**

A questionnaire has been circulated to the NDP and Liberal provincial party leadership candidates on child and youth issues. They have until Monday to complete this online survey. First Call will do a media release with the results next week.

The Federation of Community Social Services has also done a candidate survey.

### **Employment Standards Advocates Coalition**

This is a new coalition First Call is participating in, and it includes migrant worker and farmworker representatives, unions, legal advocates and other community groups. First Call's agenda includes raising the work start age and improving safety standards for working children. The Ministry of Labour is currently doing a consultation on some aspects of labour standards, including the minimum wage, which this coalition has participated in.

### **Living Wage for Families Campaign**

The campaign is engaged in preparations to demonstrate support for municipal living wage policies in anticipation of the municipal elections in November. People will be encouraged to sign on to an open letter asking candidates to support a living wage policy. Public forums on the living wage will be held in Vancouver and Surrey in April.

Production of a video to promote the campaign is underway, and Esquimalt is making progress toward becoming Canada's second living wage municipality. That council will vote on the policy in March.

### **3. Youth In and From Care Report Card for BC**

Jessy Auger presented this report card, titled *Are We Making the Grade?*, from the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks. The Federation is a youth-driven, provincial organization which works to improve the lives of youth in care. This report process involved 40 youth from around the province, and it was prepared for a national youth in care conference that took place late last year. A national youth in care body will create a Canadian report card based on the provincial contributions.

The top 5 issues identified in the report card are rights, permanency, transitioning out of care, education and social stigma. The report card assigns a grade associated with each of these issues, and offers what's working and recommendations for improvement. The report card can be downloaded from [www.fbcyicn.ca](http://www.fbcyicn.ca).

### **Discussion**

The Public Guardian should be doing advocacy work for kids in care.

Rights 2 Success, a workshop about the rights of children and youth that was developed by FBCYICN and MCFD, no longer has funding to continue training trainers. There are existing trainers with MCFD and Pacific Community Resources Society, and MCFD is currently funding Rights 2 Success workshops as a regional initiative in Vancouver Coastal with youth and staff.

Equitas is now working on children's rights education in BC.

Social worker training affects children's knowledge of their rights in care.

The Society for Children and Youth is holding a roundtable on the right to family and connection to culture on February 25.

It was suggested that FBCYICN send the report card to provincial leadership candidates and hold a news conference to bring attention to it.

FBCYICN is now looking for partnerships to take action on the recommendations in the report card.

#### 4. Representative for Children and Youth

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond gave an update on her recent work. In October, she released a report titled *Growing Up in BC* with an emphasis on the health of aboriginal children, children with special needs, children living in poverty, and children living out of the family home.

She has released her final report on MCFD's progress on the recommendations from the Hughes review of the child welfare system. She has given up on tracking the recommendations because of MCFD's lack of progress. She will have a new report card out this summer on government performance in key areas.

Another new report has just come out on childhood injuries and deaths, which was in response to frustration over the lack of reporting of these incidents to her office by MCFD. Her office is now receiving all reports on injuries and deaths from MCFD. She has also released an aggregate report on infant deaths, titled *Fragile Lives, Fragmented Systems*, which emphasizes the impact of poverty on children's safety. Of 21 families profiled in this report, 16 were receiving financial support. 15 of these families were aboriginal, and most were living in very deep poverty. Some of these families had experienced severe and repeated shocks.

It's difficult that we have no data measuring poverty on reserve in BC. Ontario has recently started collecting this data. We are also behind other provinces in our lack of a plan for poverty reduction. Having the Minister of Children and Family Development in the role of minister responsible for child poverty is not working, as MCFD has no control over the other ministries who may not be responding adequately.

Mary Ellen thinks that we will get a poverty reduction plan in BC. She also noted that improvements to the fragmented system of pre- and post-natal supports would be a major victory. The focus should be on targeting moms that need support. The province should supply free cribs.

The Representative submitted a brief to the federal Standing Committee on Justice with concerns about bill C-4 on the youth justice act. She is concerned that positive trends in youth justice could be reversed. The Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates is also working on a brief on bill C-4, and has released a report on aboriginal children in Canada. The federal government will be announcing a task force on public education on reserve, which the chief of the Assembly of First Nations has been championing.

Work continues toward a national children's advocate position. The national advocates council is including this issue in their response to Canada's progress report on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are focusing on the implementation of the convention in Canada.

UNICEF Canada now has a chief of advocacy role, who we could invite to a First Call meeting. They are campaigning for a national children's commissioner and have developed an advocacy toolkit using the UNCRC, as well as working on the repeal of section 43 of the criminal code which allows a legal defense for the physical punishment of children.

In the coming months, Mary Ellen's office will be releasing a report on 10 years of aboriginal policy at MCFD. She is also working on a major report with the Adoptive Families

Association on the experiences of people who wish to adopt and permanency planning. She is conducting an audit of plans of care for children in care, and doing asset mapping of youth transitions and educational support for children living out of the family home with the Child Welfare League of Canada. Something else to keep an eye on in the next few months are the changes under consideration for the Family Relations Act.

## **5. Partner Updates and Announcements**

The Society for Children and Youth has child rights campaign posters available, and have a calendar and radio public service announcements that will be out next month. Learn more about this campaign at [www.everychild.ca](http://www.everychild.ca). They have also produced a new toolkit on holistic early childhood development called the Aboriginal Child Friendly Communities Toolkit: Inclusion of the Early Years, which is available at [www.scyofbc.org](http://www.scyofbc.org).

Campaign 2000 is expecting that the federal budget in March will likely lead to an election. The House of Commons HUMA committee is completing a report on poverty that will require a response from government.

Government seems to want fewer service statistics kept or gathered on young children and children living in poverty. There's already a dearth of information on the well-being of aboriginal children.

CASA Victoria has now been launched as the first Canadian chapter of court-appointed special advocates for children.

McCreary Centre Society has released a new report on physical activity in BC.

**6. Time and Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday, March 9, 2011. Refreshments served at 9:00, meeting from 9:15 – 11:30 am. BC Teachers' Federation, 550 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome.