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**First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Minutes of May 14, 2008
BC Teachers' Federation Building**

In attendance:

Beatrice Adjouz – Canadian Red Cross
Alissa Allen - YWCA
Ruth Annis
Lina Aria – Mt.Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Christina Batstone – First Call
Kirsten Barnes – Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Educational Society
Darcie Bennett – Pivot Legal Society
Marian Bouchoutrouch – Mt.Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Jeff Calbick – United Way of the Lower Mainland
Cindy Carson
Lisa Chapeskie – Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion
Liz Cheng – Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
Karen De Long – BC Association of Community Living
Gladys Evoy – YWCA
Penny Goldsmith – PovNet
Jocelyne Hamel – Mt.Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Phil Hawley – Youth Justice, MCFD
Yvonne Hii – Social Planning, City of Vancouver
Sherylanne Hillis – Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society
WeiHsi Hu – Social Planning and Research Council BC
Bev Kerr – Representative for Children and Youth
Chris Kinkaid – BC Government Employees' Union
Tamara Kulusic – Community Living BC
Amanda Kumar – Pivot Legal Society
Gerald Land – Ministry for Employment and Income Assistance
Kara Leier – BC Recreation and Parks Association
Rob Louie – Kla-how-eya Aboriginal Centre
Cameron McBeth – Kla-how-eya Aboriginal Centre
Lynn McBride – BC Aboriginal Child Care Society

Chief Margery McCrae – Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Educational Society
Tram Me – Mt.Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Tricia Millman – Service Canada
Adrienne Montani – First Call
Jeannette Mowatt – Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society
Lila Murao – Hospital Employees' Union
Robyn Newton – Social Planning & Research Council BC
Julie Norton – BC Council for Families
Kim Nguyen – Mt. Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Mab Oloman – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Susan Papadionissiou – Consultant
Maya Peled – The McCreary Centre Society
Blanca Salvatierra – Mt.Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Jacqueline Smit Alex – Human Early Learning Partnership
Annie Smith – The McCreary Centre Society
Yadira Toj – Mt.Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Margaret White – BC Teachers' Federation
Kelly Woods – Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House

On phone:

Dena Carroll – MCFD, Victoria
Sasa Loggin - Make Children First, Terrace
Ginny – Make Children First, Terrace
Andrea Senft - School District 34, Abbotsford

Regrets:

Mitzi Dean - Pacific Centre Family Services
Deb Foxcroft – Ministry for Children and Family Development
Janice Nelson - Service Canada
Andrina Perry – First Call

Chair Michael Goldberg opened the meeting.

1) First Call Reports and Updates

New Coalition Brochure

Thanks to design work by Avi Goldberg and financial support from the Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association, First Call has a new, properly printed brochure.

Living Wage Roundtable

Adrienne reported on the May 9th meeting of the Living Wage Roundtable. It was well attended by a good cross-section of interested individuals and groups. Deborah Littman from London's (UK) very successful living wage campaign shared ideas and stories from their work that we can learn from. The living wage calculation report for Metro Vancouver

and Victoria will be published in the fall. We are now enlisting support for the campaign from community organizations, businesses, faith-based groups, government, the labour movement and other civil society groups.

Early Childhood Development Roundtable

The April 23rd ECD Roundtable meeting featured guest speaker Alan Markwart, Assistant Deputy Minister, Provincial Services, Ministry of Children and Family Development, along with MCFD guests Marilyn Hedlund and Lenora Angel. Topics covered in the meeting included: the newly-released ministry report, *Strong, Safe and Supported: A Commitment to BC's Children and Youth*, the new Early Learning Agency and talk of all day Kindergarten program for 3-5 year olds, the promised Early Years Plan (now scheduled for release in early 2009) and why the provincial government spent so much of the federal child care money in one-time-only grants. For details on the discussion, see the minutes of the ECD Roundtable meeting to be posted shortly on the First Call website (www.firstcallbc.org).

Fundraising Dinner, October 23/08

Michael asked people to mark this date in their calendars and plan to come out to support child and youth advocacy at the annual First Call dinner in Vancouver.

New Census Data, May 5th

Steve Kerstetter noted that the 2006 census data now available on Statistics Canada's website includes much smaller community profile data than has been available in the past. First Call issued a news release on BC's still record high child poverty rate based on this data and just-released income data.

Media at Coalition Meetings - New Policy

Last month's experience with unexpected media filming during the coalition meeting prompted the First Call Coordinating Committee to propose the following: The media, as usual, remain welcome to attend any coalition meetings; however, now they will not be allowed to film during the meeting due to the disruption this causes. They will be allowed to film people, with their consent, after the meeting.

2) Partner Updates

- SPARC BC is hosting the Community Social Planning Networking Conference on May 23 and 24 in Richmond. Free admission. (<http://www.sparc.bc.ca/events>)

- The Early Learning Framework from the provincial government has been published. We expect it will be posted on the Ministry of Education website soon.

3) Welcome and Introductions

Introductions took place after all presenters had arrived. This portion of the meeting was opened with a song and encouraging words from Aboriginal elder Tom Oleman.

4) Opening of Leveling the Playing Field for Children Presentations

The remainder of the meeting focused on the work of the three communities participating in this First Call project.

a) Klahow-eya Aboriginal Centre

Cameron McBeth and Robert Louie described the development and work of this centre. Klahow-eya is a resource centre that offers many services, including, among others, early childhood development supports, help finding employment and most recently, a youth drop-in centre. Surrey has over 12,000 urban Aboriginal people and Surrey school district has the highest number of Aboriginal students in high school. Through their community

consultations they have identified supporting youth on transitions into employment as one of the key issues. They have recently teamed up with the City of Surrey as well as other Aboriginal organizations to form the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children's Coalition, which will meet for the first time on May 27th.

b) Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House

Project leader Blanca Salvatierra introduced the neighbourhood house. The parent facilitators, Yadira Toj, Lina Arias, Kim Nguyen and Tram Me spoke about the project. The neighbourhood house decided to find out what members of their community saw as issues, using the 10 policy areas outlined in the Leveling the Playing Field for Children Action Toolkit (available on the First Call web site). Six parents of young children (later reduced to 5) received training and then proceeded to survey 54 Spanish-speaking and 50 Vietnamese-speaking families. Three of the parent facilitators were Spanish-speaking and 2 were Vietnamese. They did the surveys in their native language, using parts of the toolkit that were translated into the two languages. They found that child care, housing and adult education (including ESL training) were the 3 biggest problems. One refugee participant reported that she was told by MEIA that the rent she was paying was too high for a parent with an infant. Many families who were surveyed were unaware of services available to them and having the parent facilitators come to their home worked effectively as outreach.

The parent facilitators felt the experience had been empowering and inspiring. They are brainstorming ways in which to continue working with families in their community after the project has ended. They expressed an interest in figuring out how to support and join in campaigns for change. One parent facilitator was not present at this meeting, ironically, because she couldn't find child care. Results from the survey will be available as part of the final report from the project.

c) Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Educational Society (GWES), Hazelton

This community's first approach was to look at government policy and then ask themselves "What does policy have to do with what we have to do at the community level?"

GWES is providing a safe, culturally supportive First Nations high school education for teens and adults, as well as other educational programs such as licensed practical nursing. The program is not limited to First Nations students and they are seeing more and more non-First Nations students enrolling. Visit <http://www.gwes.ca/> for more information on the school.

Hazelton is faced with many issues. The population is 80% First Nations, and 90% of the population is on welfare. Youth suicide is a huge concern, as the community has lost over 20 youth in the past three years. Other issues are a lack of child care, transportation, affordable food, affordable housing and recreation facilities. The city used to be prosperous, but due to the closing of the lumber mill it has turned into a "ghost town."

The National Film Board came to Hazelton and wanted to make a film about youth suicide. The NFB representative taught selected students about the film-making process and they were able to make short films about their lives. These shorts have been put on DVD. They also produced a slightly longer one about suicide in Hazelton. The students have gained the skills to utilize different types of media and are now sharing those with the rest of the students.

For the Leveling the Playing Field for Children Project they are producing another DVD telling the stories of young people affected by economic inequality in their own voices and in a way that highlights the most pressing issues facing their community and proposing

solutions. The unfinished version of this DVD was shown. The project team is interested in using this new tool in their continuing advocacy to mobilize their community and government decision-makers to improve the lives of Hazelton's children, youth and families.

Discussion

Many meeting participants were visibly moved by the information shared by the community teams. Kla-how-eya offered to help GWES in any way they could, despite the distance between their communities.

Common themes of barriers to access to child care, housing, and educational and training opportunities resonated across all three communities, despite their unique circumstances, highlighting the need to look at improved public policy options.

It is hoped that the representatives of government ministries in attendance will share what they learned in the meeting with their colleagues in government and strategize how they might be of assistance.

Julie Norton offered some information about funding that may be available to help with continuing education for young parents.

5) Time and Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 11, 2008, 9:00 – 11:30 am, BC Teachers' Federation building, 550 W. 6th Avenue, Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome. The guest speaker will be Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond