

Summary Report
Children and Families: Closing the Gap Project (2006-2008)
Project No. 7064173, funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada

Project Summary

In order to establish a framework to guide the work of the *Leveling the Playing Field for Children Project*,¹ First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition (First Call) undertook a range of activities in order to raise public awareness, influence decision-makers and mobilize communities to take action on reducing poverty and economic inequality and the impacts of these issues on children and families.

The initial phase of the project in 2006 consisted of research, community consultations, consultations with government and First Call partner organizations, and establishing criteria to select the four communities for the project work. In 2007 work began on community selection and developing community-based projects, and the publication of the *Leveling the Playing Field Community Action Toolkit*. In 2008 First Call staff and consultant Cindy Carson supported communities, through meetings and phone calls, as they rolled out their projects in each of their communities. The three community projects each took on a unique focus. The Hazelton group engaged youth in producing an educational multi-media DVD for wide distribution that highlights social issues related to income inequality and poverty in their region and makes the case for proposed solutions, and hosted a community feast to raise awareness of the project's accomplishments. The Vancouver group trained parent facilitators from immigrant communities to become more knowledgeable and confident, helped mobilize large numbers of parents to communicate directly to government ministers about the issues affecting them, and created on-going support structures to continue their community engagement. The Surrey group initiated the formation of a new South Fraser coalition to focus attention and increase cooperation on meeting the needs of Aboriginal children and youth.

Concurrent with all these activities, First Call staff and volunteers were actively engaged in carrying out communications and public education work focused on the issues of poverty and income inequality and their impacts on children and families. During the course of the project, staff and volunteers gave over 20 media interviews, produced 16 news releases, commentaries and briefs, presented 62 workshops and presentations to 1,782 people and distributed over 329 items of information through the weekly e-bulletin which reaches more than 1700 people.

Project Activities and Outcomes

A. Research/Publications

A number of research projects were undertaken to inform the project with up-to-date data on poverty and its consequences for children and families in British Columbia. The following research documents were published during the three years of the project:

Kerstetter, Steve. February 2006. *Child Poverty and Income Inequality in British Columbia*. A

¹ This is the project name used in practice, rather than “Children and Families: Closing the Gap”.

Status Report. Vancouver: First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition.

Canadian Council on Learning. March, 2006. *The Social Consequences of Economic Inequality for Canadian Children, A Review of the Canadian Literature*, prepared for First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, Vancouver.

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and Social Planning and Research Council of BC. November 2006. *BC Campaign 2000: 2006 Child Poverty Report Card*. Vancouver.

Smythe, Suzanne. February 2007. *Child and youth development and income inequality: A review of selected literature*. Vancouver: First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition.

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. 2007. *Leveling the Playing Field for Children, A Community Action Toolkit*. Vancouver.

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and Social Planning and Research Council of BC. November 2007. *BC Campaign 2000: 2007 Child Poverty Report Card*. Vancouver.

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and Social Planning and Research Council of BC. November 2008. *BC Campaign 2000: 2008 Child Poverty Report Card*. Vancouver.

B. Community Consultations, 2006

In order to share the early project research information and seek input from communities throughout BC on the issue of poverty and income inequality affecting children and families, First Call hosted a number of community consultations:

1. The first consultation was a video-teleconference in February 2006 involving early childhood development contacts and other participants from around the province to discuss the findings of the first literature review.
2. A second consultation session was held with early childhood development and other contacts from around the province to present the child poverty and income inequality report data for BC. This consultation explored people's understanding of the issues, and identified possible interventions for communities to work on.
3. A consultation meeting was held for senior representatives from three provincial ministries (Employment and Income Assistance/ Education/ Children and Family Development) on the subject of cross-ministry impacts of government social policy on children and their families. Sixty-seven people participated in the dialogue and identified issues of concern for government attention.
4. Members of the Fraser Region Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Committee attended a consultation to introduce the objectives of this project and solicited feedback on participation by Aboriginal communities.
5. A meeting of partner organizations was held which explored the level of consensus on poverty reduction and income inequality policy objectives within the First Call coalition. In addition, this consultation also discussed the selection process and criteria for the four communities to be selected for mobilization demonstration projects, and gathered feedback on

the types of communication tools that communities would find most helpful.

Feedback and perspectives gathered in these initial consultations helped to shape the course of the project in order to be responsive to wide-ranging, locally-identified community needs for information and mobilizing tools.

6. In November 2007, a roundtable discussion was hosted with diverse stakeholders on the topic of a living wage for families as one of the solutions to child and family poverty. Seventeen people attended from groups representing seniors, labour, low income women, faith communities, health sector, universities, and anti-poverty groups.

C. Mobilizing Communities, 2007-2008

In 2007, a call for expressions of interest from communities wishing to be selected as a mobilization demonstration site brought in 55 responses. A selection process was completed and four communities and sponsoring agencies were chosen: Kla-how-eya Aboriginal Center in Surrey (Aboriginal, urban), Island J.A.D.E. Society in Campbell River (rural), Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House in Vancouver (urban, immigrant/refugee), and Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society in Hazelton (north, rural, Aboriginal). (In late 2007 Island JADE Society had to withdraw from the project due to staffing and funding challenges.)

A day-long workshop was planned and hosted in Vancouver on October 23, 2007 with mobilizing community representatives. The agenda included invited guests with specific areas of expertise who offered information, ideas and advice on topics identified by the communities. These topics were fundraising, developing media skills, and ideas and strategies for community mobilization. In addition this session provided excellent opportunities for sharing and networking between the community team members and the invited guests.

On-going support in the form of information, tools and consultation continued to be provided to the community projects as they finalized their plans and carried out their local activities. Project teams engaged their local communities in steering committees, consultations, worked on developing their mobilizing tools, held training sessions and engaged in dialogue with their elected representatives.

In May 2008, First Call hosted two days of sharing and presentations by community project teams, including visits to Kla-how-eya Aboriginal Centre in Surrey and Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House in Vancouver, with visitors from Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Education Society from Hazelton. Community representatives from all three project sites then presented their work and their key issues at a First Call provincial coalition meeting to a cross-sectoral audience of community and professional groups, government representatives, and other community members.

Details on the three community mobilization projects' activities are described below:

Lead agency: Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society, Hazelton, BC *One Child Left Behind Project*

Background:

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en First Nation people of Northern BC have inhabited their ancestral lands since time before memory and, through their oral history, artistic expression, language

revival and matrilineal family structure, have kept their culture thriving. They have also managed to co-exist amicably with the non-Aboriginal population that immigrated to the territories during the pioneer era. Over the past decade the community as a whole has been forced to absorb economic hardships and a resulting lack of services.

The project steering coming identified a host of problems facing youth and young families in the community, including high levels of poverty and other related social issues such as addictions, an epidemic of youth suicides, under-employment, abuse and the loss of children to the foster care system, teen pregnancy, lack of access to healthy recreational activities and safe transportation, food insecurity and homelessness.

They also identified a list of proposed solutions that could be the focus of a community mobilization.

Community Action Plan:

The project team brought together a broad range of community members, both young and old, to decide on a project focus. Many options were debated and the decision was that they would work with local youth to produce an educational multi-media DVD for broad distribution that would highlight social issues related to income inequality and poverty in their region and make the case for proposed solutions.

It was felt this format would have more impact than a written report. Illiteracy is a major problem in the Hazeltons and as such, the team felt that the use of film would be the most effective way to mobilize all of the local population into action.

Implementation strategies and activities:

The youth involved in the project were engaged and supported in producing a DVD entitled *One Child Left Behind*. The DVD was created to inform the entire community and decision-makers about the lives and challenges facing Aboriginal children, youth and young parents in the Hazeltons and suggest possible solutions. It was also designed to showcase the strengths of local individuals and institutions such as the First Nations High School/Adult Learning Centre, to give youth a voice, to create awareness and to encourage the community and those in power to work together to help those who are struggling.

Production of the DVD involved 10-15 young people and their teacher-mentor in personal storytelling, research on local conditions and issues, and all the technical aspects of film-making, including creating original music.

The project concluded with a community feast in Hazelton at the First Nations High School. The feast served as a witnessing ceremony to launch the youth-produced DVD and honour its contributors for their work. Every participant in the community feast received a copy of the DVD and additional distribution to a wide range of stakeholders, potential allies and decision-makers is underway.

"Growing up on the reserve was tough. [...] I spent a lot of time helping my family collect and preserve food throughout the year. [...] All these things I have learned I still do for my children...because it helps us get through the month." (Jeanette Mowatt)

"I would spend every penny on groceries. So my kids wouldn't starve during the month." (Sherylanne Hillis)

"Our children are meant to dance, laugh and play. In reality our children worry about money, hunger, food, shelter, safety and security and bills their families cannot afford." (Youth in Crisis film excerpt)

First Call staff and a volunteer also presented a workshop on advocacy skills and strategies for members of the Hazelton community to use to help maximize the impact of this new public education tool.

In the course of the project, the local team also took advantage of opportunities to present their concerns and issues to BC's Minister of Children and Family Development, to Opposition MLA David Chudnovsky, and to the First Nations Leadership Council.

Project outcomes:

- A powerful public education and advocacy tool was created for use by the Hazelton community.
- Youth who worked on the project gained valuable experience in film-making and shaping the content of public education/advocacy tool.
- Youth who worked on the project gained community recognition for their courage and leadership, and they felt pride in their accomplishments.
- The work done to keep youth engaged in the project even when they were experiencing crises in their lives was therapeutic for them.
- Networking with other projects and the First Call network was valuable to the youth and other Hazelton participants. They learned about other groups who shared some of their challenges and about potential allies for their issues, as well as gained new experiences, such as traveling on a plane and speaking in front of a large group. They were also able to raise awareness among individuals and groups who were previously unfamiliar with the challenges families face in rural northern BC and the community's resilience.
- The visit and training workshop by First Call staff, and their presence at the feast, was an important culmination of the project and a way to acknowledge and honour everyone's contribution to the success of the project.

Lessons learned:

- Be prepared for youth involved in the project to change, as things happen in their lives. They face lots of on-the-ground challenges. Family crises come up regularly. Interruptions caused by deaths in community, suicides, illness and other events can make it very hard to meet deadlines.
- Getting people together in a rural area is a real challenge. There are big distances, and many people have no vehicles or gas money. Safety is an issue, e.g. young women hitchhiking.
- Child care for the children of students working on the project was essential to facilitating their participation.
- People leading the project must be known and trusted in the community, or people won't participate and share their stories.

- It is very hard to find qualified project staff in this rural area. People with skills and education are already doing multiple jobs or are leaving the community for other job opportunities. This also makes meeting deadlines difficult.

Lead agency: Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, Vancouver, BC
Leveling the Playing Field: A Participatory Action Research Project

Background:

Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House (MPNH) serves a Vancouver neighbourhood with a high immigrant, low-income population. Over 45% of Mt. Pleasant’s residents are immigrants, with 12% being recent immigrants. The largest groups are Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipinos and over 16% of the population speaks neither English nor French in the home.

Community Action Plan:

The project used a participatory action research model which incorporated ‘kitchen table’ discussions and group information sessions in Spanish and Vietnamese to explore systemic barriers and long-term solutions to social exclusion and economic equality within these communities. The broad outcomes of this project were to:

- Increase the social inclusion and economic equality of families and children through improved policy and practices.
- Build capacity within these communities to use advocacy and education to influence key decision-makers about issues they are facing in their communities.
- Apply the learning outcomes to other immigrant communities

Implementation strategies and activities:

An advisory committee of immigrant serving agencies, neighbourhood house staff and health representatives was formed to guide the project.

As part of the capacity building strategy, an 8-week training series was developed by the coordinator for parent facilitators who would be working within their communities. These sessions covered topics such as leadership and personal development, simple research skills, small group facilitation skills, advocacy techniques and ways to understand policies and other systemic issues that keep community members isolated and in poverty. In order to facilitate attendance, child care was provided.

Concurrent with the training, the advisory team developed a simple survey for parent facilitators to use as a research tool to gain information on key issues of concern to families in their communities. Surveys were completed by 105 families during this outreach phase. The top three issues identified through the survey as barriers to full social inclusion for immigrant families were access to affordable child care, housing and educational upgrading opportunities.

“When I arrived to Canada I felt isolated and frustrated. Just being a stay home mother doesn’t make me feel fulfilled. This program is ideal for mothers with children.” (parent)

“I used to live in a communist country where as citizens we are afraid to give our comments to the government ... that was why I was so aware of giving our ideas to the government at the conference. Surprisingly, my partner, Kim, spoke a bit about our difficult situation as Vietnamese immigrants, the government representatives really listened to her and we were safe. It was such a wonderful experience and now I believe that Canada is a free country where we can ask for our rights.” (parent)

The twelve fact sheets from the *Community Action Toolkit* were translated into Spanish and Vietnamese and were used by the parent facilitators in their community mobilization work. These translated materials were also distributed to other immigrant serving agencies for use in their programs.

In Vancouver, nine 'kitchen table' discussions were held (six Spanish-speaking groups and three Vietnamese groups) with a total of 38 families (104 participants). Child care was provided at these meetings for 123 children. These sessions enabled the parent facilitators to increase their self-confidence and group facilitation skills. The families who participated in the meetings were able to identify gaps relating to public policies, services and facilities and they were motivated to respond to these concerns by discussing ways they could mobilize within their communities to address the issues.

*"I was an amateur in this kind of tasks, but now I am feeling like being pushed to learn more about photography and media. I am very proud of this particular job because I was part of the project and the fact that it was developed by me, a parent-facilitator and no[t] [by] an external multimedia company, tell[s] me again what a great opportunity for learning this project is."
(parent)*

Parent facilitators met with each other, the Advisory Committee and First Call on a regular basis to share findings and facilitate planning for future activities. Advocacy strategies were developed and implemented.

As a result of one of these initiatives, and in response to their identified needs, parents from both the Vietnamese and Latin American communities wrote over 150 letters to BC government ministers advocating for more child care spaces, reduced costs for child care for BC families, and the reduction of financial barriers to accessing adult basic education and training for immigrants. They staged an event using baby bottles as envelopes for their letters, attracting media attention and gained an opportunity to be speak out in a TV interview.

A second 4-week training program for six new parent facilitators was conducted in the final months of the project, with parent facilitators from the first cohort leading the training. This second cohort of trainees then conducted four workshops for other parents on civic engagement, adult education and other topics of interest, attended by a total of 53 parents and their children.

Project outcomes:

- The project built capacity within communities to advocate for their needs. One parent said '*I feel that I now have a voice*'. Parent participants developed greater personal resilience, overcame isolation, improved their mental health, and they and their children built valuable connections and friendships with other families in the community.
- Parent facilitators gained confidence and skills, many of them transferable to employment opportunities. For one parent her involvement resulted in full time employment in the Neighbourhood House.
- The project was able to leverage additional funding to develop *Leveling the Playing Field* Phase 2, to continue to train, support and encourage civic participation by more families within these two communities.
- Additional funding was utilized to translate materials which can be used in many other immigrant serving agencies

- One of the parent facilitators was contracted to produce a video story documenting the activities and accomplishments of the whole participatory action research project, which will be posted on First Call's and MPNH's web sites.
- The Spanish-speaking parents organized a MPNH Parents Google Group Network as a means of communicating about community activities, information on family matters and advocacy issues. This group is creating a data bank of family assets in order to connect people with potential job opportunities.
- New drop-in programs for the Latin American and Vietnamese parents were started so that parents could continue to meet and learn and grow together. Two of the parents offered to organize the drop-in programs and an average of 10-15 families are attending each Saturday. Funding for this program was obtained from the Neighbourhood House.
- Another spin-off of the project is the development of Community Learning Circles, through a partnership with Langara Community College and Frontier College, giving families engaged in the project more educational opportunities in literacy and civic engagement.

Lessons learned:

- The participatory action research approach makes participants feel comfortable and empowered to speak out and voice their personal and community concerns. This approach develops a sense of ownership and direction from the participants themselves.
- Parent surveys are effective tools to identify and raise awareness of common concerns and kitchen table discussions are a good way for parent facilitators to gain experience and confidence in small group facilitation.
- It is very important to have a project coordinator and mentor who is a parent with experience similar to those recruited to participate, to translate materials and to hold discussions in first languages.
- Providing child care is essential to the engagement of parents of young children.
- Training and mentoring of parent facilitators builds personal and community capacity and leadership, which is key to sustaining the project's community development objectives.
- Bonds and increased awareness of common challenges are created across language and cultural barriers through sharing sessions with the other project communities. This reduces perceptions of social isolation and creates a greater sense of community.
- This community development project is very labour intensive and requires more funding for project coordination, outreach, translation and mentoring. Parents who take on facilitator roles need to be appreciated and supported through financial incentives.
- A good, engaged advisory committee is valuable, especially in the early stages of the project, and therefore worth the time and effort required to organize meeting times for busy people.

**Lead agency: Kla-how-eya Aboriginal Centre, Surrey, BC
South Fraser Aboriginal Children and Youth Coalition Committee**

Background:

Kla-how-eya is a neighbourhood hub agency serving the local urban Aboriginal population in Surrey, a fast growing urban area which houses the highest percentage of off-reserve Aboriginal people in BC. There is high level of poverty amongst the Aboriginal population in this area. Aboriginal children experience high rates of mortality, injury and disability.

Community Action Plan:

The goal of this *Leveling the Playing Field* project was to build social capital for all service providers in the Fraser Valley catchment area to work more effectively with Aboriginal children, youth and families.

It was felt that a new network was needed that would connect Fraser Valley family-serving agencies, in order to build relationships that would lead to more effective coordination and collaboration between community services for Aboriginal children, youth and families. Kla-how-eya was identified as a leader in the community and it was felt, therefore, that they were in the best position to lead the process of drawing these agencies together.

*“Eighty to ninety percent of the infants in my [ECD] program are foster babies that are in care because of alcohol and drug exposure. Most are from high-risk families that are direct [results] of residential school, colonization, multi-generational trauma, abuse with the biggest being POVERTY. These babies will be affected for life and will grow up with numerous challenges and learning disabilities. They are already dealt a bad card before they are even born, before they even get to preschool or kindergarten. I take the preventative approach and we need to support our people way before this process.”
(Nadine Gagne, Kla-how-eya Early Childhood Consultant)*

Implementation strategies and activities:

Initial consultation meetings were held in February and May of 2008 to assess the extent of shared interest in creating the network. These meetings brought together a range of representatives from Fraser Valley child and youth serving agencies. In these meetings each agency presented their services and resources, identified common areas of interest and discussed next steps, including the need to create an agenda for organizations to meet on common ground.

All participants in the consultations expressed an interest in generating a greater mutual understanding of the respective functions, goals and values of the region's child and family service agencies.

After achieving agreement from several major regional service providers on the importance of establishing a new regional coalition committee, additional meetings were held and focused on defining priority issues and expanding its membership to include other government departments, such as provincial ministries.

Project outcomes:

- A consensus was reached on the goal of establishing a coalition of organizations focused on enhancing the well-being of Aboriginal children, youth and families in the South Fraser Region in order to gain a greater benefit for this marginalized group.

- The South Fraser Aboriginal Children and Youth Coalition Committee was formed. Terms of reference were established for the Committee articulating the following vision:

“...to promote healthy development for Aboriginal children and youth that will allow them to make independent and healthy life choices thereby increasing their chances to become gainfully employed, to make a contribution to Canadian society and to have future options.”

- Kla-how-eya is committed to maintaining the coalition and to seeking ongoing funding to support this work. There are benefits to all concerned in building relationships with other agencies, and Kla-how-eya will learn more about how mainstream issues are often similar to Aboriginal concerns and the coalition will provide opportunities to speak with one voice on these issues.
- The project helped raise the profile of Kla-how-eya and increased their credibility in the community.

Lessons learned:

- Aboriginal youth are always dealing with systemic barriers including how they are taught.
- Mainstream social service providers need be taught about cultural safety, raising the importance of integrating cultural awareness of Aboriginal communities and nations into pre-service and in-service training of social workers, teachers, and health care workers. Traditional Aboriginal cultural norms and practices create safety, but the dominant service model and organizational culture operates in tension with these norms and practices, making services less effective.
- Priority solutions to enhancing the prospects of Aboriginal children and youth in an urban setting are employment training, early childhood development, child care, school readiness, enhanced language acquisition and services for children with disabilities.
- Recruiting and retaining project staff for a small project like this is challenging for urban Aboriginal agencies. Capable individuals are quickly lured away by other, more financially rewarding job opportunities. Having to re-hire and re-orient project staff increases the workload on the sponsoring organization's senior staff, makes it challenging to meet pre-set timelines and undermines the continuity needed when building relationships for community development goals.
- While there is plenty of good will, there are challenges in getting time commitments from senior representatives of other social service agencies to attend meetings of a new body. They have to be convinced they have a role to play and that attending will help them better serve their target communities.

D. Public Education and Media Communications, 2006-2008

- First Call has distributed 200 copies of the Leveling the Playing Field Community Action Toolkit to communities, agencies and partner organizations. First Call has also continued distribution of the research products on the incidence and impacts of poverty and income inequality on children and youth through coalition events and contacts.

- In 2006 First Call created an electronic public service announcement (PSA) on child poverty in BC for television broadcast and web posting (see www.firstcallbc.org). Our PSA on child poverty aired for several years on a Lower Mainland cable channel.
- Twenty radio and TV interviews were given during this period – especially in the period surrounding the annual release of the Child Poverty Report Cards.
- First Call published 16 news releases, commentaries and briefs focused on the issues of poverty and income inequality and their impacts on children and families, including federal and provincial budget analyses. Secondary distribution of media commentaries from Campaign 2000 and other sources were also used to build awareness of the persistence of child poverty.
- 329 items focused on issues related to poverty and income inequality were disseminated to the more than 1700 people who receive First Call's weekly e-bulletins.
- Sixty-two presentations on child and family poverty issues and impacts and proposed solutions were made to a broad range of audiences, including health care service providers, business, secondary and post-secondary students, unions and faith-based communities. These presentations and workshops reached a total direct audience of 1782 people over the three years of the project.
- The annual Child Poverty Report Card for BC was used as a key public education tool. First Call has witnessed additional and continued use of the research data produced by this project and the supplementary information items shared by First Call through a variety of media and methods, by the MLAs in debates in the provincial legislature and by our coalition partners in their work on behalf of children, youth and families at the provincial level and in local communities.

Conclusion

This project succeeded in accomplishing its objectives at the local and the broader public awareness levels, contributing to significant public awareness and community mobilization activity in BC focused on the urgency of addressing child and family poverty, reducing its impacts on children's health and well-being and taking up proposed solutions.

The unique and dynamic processes and outcomes of the three local community mobilization projects demonstrated the relevance of examining these issues and the importance of engaging those most affected in speaking out for change. The lessons learned from these local projects and their contributions to increased community resilience and capacity are some of the most valuable and long-term outcomes.

At the broader level of public discourse on these issues in the province, there is ample evidence of the 'breakthrough' made in getting the issue of child and family poverty on the public agenda and more a part of 'common knowledge'. This evidence rests in a growing body of references in on-line commentaries, media reports, dialogue among elected officials and calls to action from a wide range of community groups, trade unions, business people, faith groups and other community members. Professionals in the health sector have become particularly active in focusing on the need to reduce poverty as a way to reduce health inequities. This project played

a key role in fostering this public awareness and dialogue in the province of BC.

Some organizational lessons across the three engaged communities included:

- A truly participatory action research or community development project only works in an organizational culture that allows the community to take ownership, to change direction, and to find additional support (financial and other resources). This means letting go of pre-set expectations and predetermined outcomes and letting local priorities surface.
- Part of the challenge in this type of mobilization project will always be the recruitment and retention of participants from within the affected community. Project sponsors need to be flexible and prepared for setbacks. They will need to focus on how to help potential participants overcome fear. Fear of government or official institutions is to be expected within marginalized communities and lack of knowledge is a huge issue for low income, isolated parents.
- Knowledge was reinforced in all three projects about the importance of building non-exploitative, trusting and respectful relationships with people who are feeling marginalized and socially excluded. In addition to letting participants take ownership of the direction of the project, respect can be demonstrated through providing concrete and adequate support for their involvement (financial incentives, child care, transportation), culturally appropriate materials and information, chances to build personal skills and opportunities for recognition and validation of their struggles, strengths, contributions and accomplishments.
- The loss of one of our original mobilizing community sponsors, the Island JADE Society, serves as an illustration of the capacity challenges faced by organizations who want to participate in pro-active community development work, but find their already inadequate resources fully engaged in providing direct services to their communities. In recognition of this resource crunch for all sponsoring agencies, First Call made every effort to keep reporting demands to a minimum. For example verbal exit interviews were scheduled with project teams, rather than requiring them to submit long narrative final reports.

Working with the three community teams was a privilege for First Call staff and partner organizations. The teams' accomplishments reinforced critical lessons for our coalition about the importance of drawing on the direct experiences and engagement of low income families with children. We are also mindful of the high level of active collaboration across sectors that was necessary to produce the public education and other materials used to inform and invigorate the broader public discussion and a shared commitment to action.