

First Call's Weekly Announcements – June 22, 2010

Next ECD Roundtable: July 6

Next Coalition Meeting: September 8

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We encourage you to forward and share the Weekly Announcements with your networks. If circulating excerpts from the Weekly Announcements, please acknowledge First Call as the source of the information.

We welcome your comments, suggestions and any research or event information you wish to have shared with the First Call network. Please let us know what's going on in your community so we can help spread the word!

Please visit our web site at www.firstcallbc.org for further details on upcoming First Call meetings, events, new publications and more.

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Advocacy/Calls to Action

1. 2008 Child Poverty Rates and Bill to Eliminate Poverty

Last week Statistics Canada released Income of Canadians survey data from 2008. The data show that, measured by the after-tax Low Income Cut-Off, BC has now had the highest child poverty rate in Canada for 7 years in a row. The rate is 10.4%, which is a decrease from 13% the previous year. BC also has the highest rate of poverty for all persons in Canada at 11.4%.

Read press releases from [First Call](#) and from [Campaign 2000](#) on the national child poverty rate.

A bill was recently introduced in the House of Commons by MP Tony Martin for "An Act to Eliminate Poverty in Canada." Read more about the bill from [Canada Without Poverty](#).

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2. Update on Refugee Transportation Loans Campaign

In the last Weekly Announcements we circulated a list of MPs responses to our question about their support of the eradication of the refugee transportation loans program. Since then we've heard from two more MPs - both Alex Atamanenko and Denise Savoie's offices contacted us to indicate their support for our campaign. Read our up to date list of MP responses [here](#), and [let us know](#) if you've contacted your MP.

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3. Representative Releases Report on Child in Home of a Relative Program

On June 15, the Representative for Children and Youth has released *No Shortcuts to Safety: Doing Better for Children Living with Extended Family*. From the news release:

A large group of B.C. children is at risk of potential harm while living in homes of relatives, and there is an urgent need for government to re-screen the adults caring for them, says an audit report released today by B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth.

No Shortcuts to Safety; Doing Better for Children Living with Extended Family reports on an in-depth audit carried out by the Representative, examining B.C.'s Child in the Home of a Relative (CIHR) program.

Today, about 4,500 B.C. children and youth remain in the CIHR program, and many will continue to live with relatives under the program for years to come. CIHR is a financial assistance program that supports children placed by their parents in a relative's home, when parents are unable to assume full responsibility for financially supporting the child. Most kin carers are women, often single, and living near or beneath the poverty line. They are also often grandmothers of the children.

"Government needs to go back and do the right thing for all the children that remain in the CIHR program," said Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. "Service providers have raised serious concerns for years about the well-being of children placed in relatives' home under this inadequate screening, and my audit finds much basis for those concerns." [...]

Read the report [here](#).

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4. Give Feedback on the BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework

The First Nations ECD Council is seeking feedback on the First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework by the end of this month. The consultation document is available [here](#), and feedback can be submitted [here](#).

The six principles embedded in the framework are:

1. First Nations ways of knowing and being - relationships, programs, services, supports, practices, infrastructure and governance structures must be imbued and anchored in First Nations knowledge(s).
2. Community-based and directed - the care of children is a sacred and communal responsibility starting with parents and family and extending to community and Nation. ECD programs and services are developed through a community and Nation-driven process and delivered based on the needs of First Nations communities.
3. Holistic, universal, accessible, and comprehensive - ECD programs, services and supports should be accessible to every child, whether living off-reserve or on-reserve, in a small isolated community or in a large urban centre, and should support the development of the whole child including his/her social, emotional, physical, cognitive, cultural, linguistic and spiritual development. Programs and services should be comprehensive so that the diverse needs of children and families can be met.
4. Integration and coordination - ECD legislation, regulations, standards, policies, and program and service delivery structures that are synchronized and aligned result in an integrated and coordinated ECD system.
5. Transparent and accountable - monitoring, evaluation and reporting on ECD programs, services and supports leads to quality offerings, and ensure that they are successfully meeting the desired outcomes for children and their families. Accountability measures also serve to identify gaps, overlaps and deficiencies.
6. Sustainability - sustainability means that funding for ECD programs and services should be continuous and consistent over time in order to facilitate parental/family trust, ensure programs and services are able to recruit and

retain qualified staff, and have enough longevity to make a difference in children's lives.

The three goals that will lead to improved outcomes for all BC First Nations children are:

1. Increased availability, accessibility, and participation in ECD programs, services and supports by First Nations children and families;
2. Enhanced quality of ECD programs, services and supports; and
3. Increased integration and collaboration at all levels of a First Nations ECD system.

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5. MLA's Asked to Support Pesticide Ban

A group of BC health, environment, and animal welfare organizations including First Call have written to BC MLAs asking for support of a joint statement that calls for a comprehensive, province-wide ban on cosmetic pesticides. The letter urges MLAs to move forward with legislation prohibiting the use and sale of lawn and garden pesticides. The joint statement is available [here](#).

Government conducted a public consultation on this issue, and the comments are now available in this [report](#) from the Ministry of the Environment.

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Research & Resources

1. Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts

The Canadian Facts is a publication by Juha Mikkonen and Dennis Raphael which considers 14 social determinants of health, including income and income distribution, education, early childhood development and social exclusion.

From the section on income and income distribution:

Income is perhaps the most important social determinant of health. Level of income shapes overall living conditions, affects psychological functioning, and influences health-related behaviours such as quality of diet, extent of physical activity, tobacco use, and excessive alcohol use. In Canada, income determines the quality of other social determinants of health such as food security, housing, and other basic prerequisites of health. [...]

Income comes to be especially important in societies which provide fewer important services and benefits as a matter of right. In Canada, public education until grade

12, necessary medically procedures, and libraries are funded by general revenues, but childcare, housing, post-secondary education, recreational opportunities, and resources for retirement must be bought and paid for by individuals.

It can be downloaded for free from www.thecanadianfacts.org.

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2. Keeping Tabs on Parliament

Openparliament.ca is a volunteer-run website that provides up to date information on what's happening at the House of Commons by subject, MP, or bill. You can find your MP and see how they voted recently, view comments and speeches made in the House, stories about them in the news, and any legislation that they've introduced. Check out this unique tool.

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3. iMinds – Resources for Mental Health Literacy

From the University of Victoria's Centre for Addictions Research of BC, iMinds is a set of learning resources aiming to help teachers help their students understand and manage health-related behaviours.

The iMinds curriculum is now available for Grades 6 – 10. Find out more [here](#).

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4. What Canadian Youth Tell Us about Disclosing Abuse

An article in the journal *Child Abuse and Neglect* reports findings from a study of anonymous disclosures of abuse experiences among a national sample of youth in Canada who participated in the Red Cross' RespectedED violence prevention program. From the abstract:

...findings suggest high rates of hidden abuse, with less than a quarter of youth with abuse experiences reporting a disclosure. Disclosure patterns vary with boys, youth aged 14–15, victims of physical abuse, and those abused by a family member being most likely to disclose to professionals or the police. Interviews help to explain the large number of youth who express reticence to disclose to professionals. Specifically, the data show a perception among youth of negative consequences following disclosure.

This data raises questions regarding why youth are reluctant to report abuse to professionals, preferring to cope independently or by confiding in peers. Youth in this study report feeling anxious about disclosing to authorities, fearful of the potential loss of control over decisions which affect them.

Findings suggest that professionals who provide support to young people's own networks of family and friends may help to facilitate youths' disclosures of abuse. Furthermore, prevention programming that promotes a positive attitude towards disclosure of abuse experiences and provides an anonymous forum (such as an evaluation form) in which to do so is likely to encourage more young people to disclose.

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5. Caught in the Time Crunch Report

From the Canadian Index of Wellbeing:

Canadians, especially women, are caught in a time crunch and the trend has been getting worse over the past 15 years, says a new report by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), Caught in the Time Crunch: Time Use, Leisure and Culture in Canada.

"People are struggling to meet the competing demands of a workplace that can reach out to them 24/7, caring for children and aging parents, and their own need to refresh body and mind. As individuals and as a society we are paying a steep price for this time crunch. We're less healthy, both physically and mentally and we have less time for leisure and relaxation with family," said The Honourable Roy J. Romanow, Chair of the CIW Advisory Board.

Among the report's key findings:

- *Teenagers 15-17 who had a meal on a typical day with their parents plunged from 64% in 1992 to 35% in 2005.*
- *The proportion of Canadians experiencing high levels of time crunch grew from 16% in 1992 to 20% in 2005.*
- *About 23% of women felt time pressured and 17% of men.*
- *In 1992, 23% of Canadians worked non-standard hours (weekends, evenings, nights, rotating shifts). By 2009 the proportion jumped to 29%.*
- *Low income, living in a poor neighbourhood, low parental education, recent immigration, racialized status, and Aboriginal status affect participation in leisure and culture.*

The report highlights a number of pressures on time use, including a lack of comprehensive child care support for many Canadians, an increase in passive activities for children and youth, and leisure and culture activities becoming more expensive.

Download the report [here](#).

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Announcements

1. Remembering a Children's Education Hero

From Caring for First Nations Children Society:

On May 31, 2010, Canada lost a national treasure – she was 15 years old. Shannen Koostachin from Attawapiskat First Nation led the largest child lead rights campaign in Canadian history demanding that all children in Canada, including First Nations children, get safe schools they can feel proud of.

Thousands of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children sent letters to the Canadian Government demanding a chance to learn in safe and proper schools. Shannen went to school in a series of broken down portable trailers set beside the old abandoned school that had been contaminated by thousands of gallons of diesel fuel. Three Ministers of Indian Affairs had promised the over 400 children in Attawapiskat a new school and failed to deliver.

Shannen was 13 years old when Minister Strahl delivered the news that the children would not get a new school any time soon – government could not afford it. Shannen and the other grade 8 students cancelled their graduation trip to Niagara Falls and used the money to send three youth leaders, including Shannen, down to see Minister Strahl to ask in person for a new school. As Shannen said "I looked at the rich room he sat in with all of his staff and I told him I wish we had a classroom as nice as his office every day." Minister Strahl went on to say his government could not afford it. Shannen told the Minister she would never give up and she never did.

Shannen often spoke of the love and moral teachings her family gave to her and how these were a source of strength as she reached out to many non-Aboriginal school children and adults to help them understand that the federal government provides less elementary and secondary funding for children on reserves than other children receive from the provinces. Something the Auditor General of Canada noted a decade ago.

Member of Parliament Charlie Angus was with Shannen as they toured a non-Aboriginal school and he found that she was lingering in the classrooms as he walked down the hall. He walked back to ask her what was wrong and she said "I wish I had my life to live over again just so I could go to a nice school like this."

In 2008, Shannen was one of only 45 children in the world to be nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize given by the Nobel Laureates. She viewed the nomination as one honoring the work all of the children, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, had done together to stand up for the right to learn and the right to proper schools. She wrote that "well the three or four things I would like people to know about me is. One, I do not like broken promises. Two, I do not like seeing my siblings going to school in washrooms. And three, I would like them to know too that I AM NOT GIVING UP."

In December of 2009, Minister Strahl promised the children of Attawapiskat a new school but there are hundreds of First Nations children across the country going to run down schools that are poorly funded. Conditions are so bad that only one in four First Nations children graduate from high school. All First Nations children have dreams – to be doctors, cooks, dancers, carpenters and some, like Shannen, want to be lawyers so they can make sure all children have a chance to succeed in Canada.

Shannen never lived long enough to see a proper school built in Attawapiskat so all Canadians must make sure the Government of Canada delivers on its promise and provides equitable funding for children's services on reserves in her memory. If Canada can spend billions on security for wealthy nations around the world, it can spend a fraction of that on safe schools that all children in the country can be proud of.

To find out more about the Attawapiskat School Campaign, a memorial scholarship for Shannen, and other ideas on how you can help go to www.fncaringsociety.com.

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2. Representative's Awards of Excellence – Nominations Open!

The Representative for Children and Youth's third annual Awards of Excellence recognize and encourage excellence in British Columbia's child- and youth-serving system, and reflect the established goals of the Representative's Office; specifically those that:

- Profile and recognize best practices in program and service delivery to children and youth, and by youth;
- Support initiatives to improve outcomes for all children with respect for their place, culture and community; and
- Draw on lessons learned to promote prevention initiatives and best practices.

These awards recognize and honour people and organizations whose work with children and youth exemplify innovation, respect, and a commitment to improving outcomes and professional excellence.

A panel of qualified individuals will assist the Representative in selecting the winners.

Winners will be recognized and honoured at award ceremonies in October 2010.

The nomination deadline is September 3. Find out more [here](#).

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3. Summer Institute on K-12 Mental Health

From the BC Teachers' Federation:

On Thursday, August 26th (8.30 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.) at BC Children’s Hospital, there will be a Summer Institute on “Mental health and substance abuse issues among children and youth in BC schools.” Four topics will be covered:

- Anxiety
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm
- Mental health & alcohol and drug use

There is no cost to participate but registration is required. There are only 120 places available for the on-site Institute at Children’s Hospital and up to 50 spots for webcasts anywhere in BC. Contact Kiera Ishmael at kishmael@cw.bc.ca to register. The registration deadline is June 30.

This event is a collaboration between the BCTF and Children’s Hospital to provide and support professional development on K-12 mental health issues for teachers and other educators in BC’s schools.

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4. Langara Summer School on Building Community

Do you have an interest in sustainability, growing food, social change, community building, nonviolent communication or environmental art? Do you want to make a difference in your community and in the world? As a community activist, volunteer or worker, are you interested in learning strategies for working more effectively, being more creative or for personal renewal? Are you looking to connect with others who are working for a more just and sustainable world?

Langara’s Summer School on Building Community offers all of this and more! From June 11 – 26, over 35 workshops, presentations community tours, films and dialogues will be held – most of them at Langara (a few activities will take place in various community locations). Many sessions are free of charge or by donation. We are pleased to offer a 50% discount for full-time students with valid ID and to make the events accessible for people on low incomes. Contact Leslie at lkemp@langara.bc.ca or 604-323-5981 for further information or visit www.langara.bc.ca/social-cultural/summer-school/courses

To register, please call 603-323-5322.

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5. Learning Disabilities Association Summer Programs

The Learning Disabilities Association of Vancouver’s Resource Centre is running summer programs for children and youth from July 19 to August 13. Here’s a sample of their programs:

ONE TO ONE LITERACY program provides 7-14 year olds with individualized support to help improve reading, comprehension, writing, and spelling. One trained tutor per student.

MATH TUTORING is based on the Hands on Math program and is a multi-sensory approach to achieving mastery of basic mathematics. One trained tutor per 1 student.

ORTON GILLINGHAM TUTORING is a phonics-based, multi-sensory program designed to assist students who experience difficulties with reading, writing and spelling. One trained tutor per 1 student.

YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT is a program for students with learning difficulties in grades 6-8. This program will prepare students for the transition to high school. Topics covered in this session include homework help, study skills and test taking. Ratio: 1 instructor to 4 students.

Find out more [here](#).

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