

April 12, 2017

**PRESENT:**

Anita Vaillancourt, University of the Fraser Valley  
Beverly Pitman, United Way of the Lower Mainland  
Catherine Evans, Vancouver Park Board  
Dr. Charisa Patricelli  
Chris Buchner, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks  
Daniel Roque, VCC student/First Call  
Earyn Wheatley, Greenpeace Canada  
Elise Patricelli, University of Victoria  
Fionn Yaxley, BC Aboriginal Child Care Society  
Geraldine Gutierrez, Retired social worker  
Gyda Chud, First Call/Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC  
Heather Hazel, Early Childhood Educators of BC  
Jason Gordon, BC Association for Child Development and Intervention

Jean Moore, BC Alliance for Mental Health Illness and Addiction  
Joan Beaty, University Women's Club Vancouver  
Joanne Hugh, Sto:lo Tribal Council  
Katie Hyslop, The Tyee  
Larry Commodore  
Lisa Young, SUCCESS  
**Lynne Kent, University Women's Club Vancouver and Learning Disabilities Association of BC**  
Mab Oloman, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC  
Mark Gifford, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House  
Michelle Davies, BC Teachers' Federation  
Mike Clarke, BC Government and **Service Employees' Union**  
Nicole Low, VCC student/First Call  
Patricia Grohne, University **Women's Club Vancouver**  
Rocio Vasquez, Family Services of Greater Vancouver  
Tina Dam, Inclusion BC

Trish Garner, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition  
Vanessa Bui, PeerNetBC  
**Viveca Ellis, Single Mothers' Alliance of BC**  
Wendy Major, Truth and Reconciliation Group Chilliwack  
Kris Archie, Vancouver Foundation  
Adrienne Montani, First Call  
John Kennedy, First Call  
Julie Cheng, First Call  
Deanna Ogle, Living Wage for Families Campaign

**CALL-IN:**

Deborah Garrity, Parent Volunteer

**REGRETS:**

Debbie Anderson, Pacific Community Resources Society  
Mary Johnston, Five Family Place Partnership/Eastside Family Place  
Sarah Dunham, Roots of Empathy  
Sonia Bhatia, BC Society of Transition Houses

## 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cheryl Mixon welcomed everyone and acknowledged we are meeting on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. A round of introductions was made.

## 2. FIRST CALL UPDATES

### ECD Roundtable update

The ECD RT had a conference call with three representatives of the Ministry of Children and Family Development's Early Years Office about spending the anticipated federal funds for child care announced in the federal budget in March. One of our messages was not to use it to increase subsidy, as transfers to individuals increase parent fees and don't build a system.

There are ways to use the first year's limited funds strategically to increase access, such as supported child development funds to enable children with special needs to attend child care programs.

Federal child care funding – Campaign 2000 put out a comment saying they do not support the federal government's stated intention to target new child care funding to "vulnerable families," arguing the best way to support children's healthy growth and development is through a universal child care system that promotes social integration inclusive of children from mixed incomes and cultural backgrounds and of children with disabilities.

### Living Wage for Families Campaign update

Deanna Ogle, campaign organizer, reported that an election kit and a website ([goodjobsbc.ca](http://goodjobsbc.ca)) have been created. We're calling on the provincial government to pay the living wage to all the BC government's direct and contract staff. There are contract cleaners and dietary support workers in the health care system, for example, who are not making a living wage. Coalition members are encouraged to use the [photo booth](#) and [upload images](#) to Instagram and start a conversation about the living wage.

The Living Wage for Families Campaign is working with 10 communities across BC on the 2017 living wage calculation to be released on April 26. Despite rising child care and housing costs, we are seeing a decrease in the living wage in some communities because of the Canada Child Benefit. We have changed the methodology to include two cell phones (no land line) and internet. We are seeing a barrier to digital access in rural and urban communities.

Deanna is working through issues about basic income. We welcome any policy that reduces stigma for income social assistance, but basic income without adequate child care and minimum wages may subsidize low-wage employers and undermine existing benefits such as child benefits.

#### Discussion:

The new living wage rates will be announced through a province-wide media release and op-ed for communities to use in local media. The focus will be on housing as an issue that impacts us all in our communities.

As initial calculations come out we are seeing that housing is very expensive in resort-based communities like Revelstoke. Their living wage is still lower than Metro Vancouver but it's getting high across the province. The challenge is how to articulate the housing problem across BC.

### Child Labour campaign update

First Call has been working on this issue of BC Employment Standards since the government dropped the work-start age to 12 in 2003. We have published two research reports. Parents are expected to take care of their kids in the workplace by signing a letter, but this is often not happening in practice and is not effective protection.

Canada has now signed the International Labour Organization's Convention 138 regarding minimum work-start ages. We are required to come into compliance by June 2017. That convention says the minimum age for regular work should be 15 or after compulsory school age. In BC that would be age 16. It doesn't mean younger teens can't work but there are few protections, e.g., they can work midnight shift and no restrictions on kind of tasks.

First Call has been awarded a \$25,000 grant by LUSH Cosmetics to use for campaigning on this issue. We will be able to do some polling to help us shape a public awareness campaign.

## Federal poverty reduction strategy consultations

Coalition members are encouraged to participate through the [website](#), which includes a [survey for organizations](#). It would help if multiple voices take part. Please give us a call if you would like to discuss this.

For well laid-out background information, you can go to [dignityforall.ca](#), which has been calling for a national poverty reduction strategy.

Campaign 2000 is planning to hold community consultations to bring more voices into the feedback to government. The United Ways across Canada are involved in these community consultations. The United Way of the Lower Mainland has decided to put their energy into calling for a BC poverty reduction plan instead.

Trish Garner from the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition has been working with groups on queer and transgender consultation. People can contact her ([trish@bcpovertyreduction.ca](mailto:trish@bcpovertyreduction.ca)) for information.

## Presentations and publications (see end of minutes)

### 3. CINDY BLACKSTOCK, FIRST NATIONS CHILD & FAMILY CARING SOCIETY ON CANADA'S COMPLIANCE WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL RULING

Canada's 150 birthday is coming up. What have we learned?

We have always known about the harms to First Nations children. We have been trained to look away and allow racial discrimination against them to be normalized our entire lives. Canada is one of the few countries in the world that institutionalized racial discrimination against First Nations children on reserve.

In 2007 the Assembly of First Nations and the Caring Society filed a federal human rights complaint alleging government's underfunding of child welfare on reserves as compared to funding for other children was racially discriminatory.

The second part of the complaint was about Jordan's Principle. First Nations children are denied services – education, health, early childhood – because of jurisdictional differences. Parliament passed a resolution in support of Jordan's Principle but has never implemented it properly. Instead they've interpreted it so narrowly no one qualifies.

Canada fought the complaint even though their own documents provided evidence of discrimination and government awareness of this problem.

The Human Rights Tribunal decision came down on January 26, 2016, ordering the government to stop the racial discrimination. To date, two non-compliance orders against the government have been issued, and a further decision expected soon. The complainants may have to file contempt charges in federal court to enforce compliance.

The government's failure to act is still incentivizing removal of First Nations children from their families.

The 2016 federal budget contained insufficient funds to comply with the order. BC children are being shorted millions of dollars in child welfare funding by this non-compliance.

In July 2016 the government unilaterally announced they have up to \$382 million for Jordan's Principle, but only for children with short-term critical illness and disability.

Jordan's Principle applies to all First Nations children on and off reserve and to all services. If coalition members see any cases where Jordan's Principle is not happening (as in denial of service because of jurisdictional disputes over who will pay), [let them know about it](#) because this is a breach in the tribunal's order. The \$382 million for Jordan's Principle was based on a narrow definition of health.

The government says they can't comply until they've completed an engagement process. They say they don't know enough in order to implement the order, but can't answer questions about what they don't know.

As part of the engagement process they have unilaterally announced a conference to talk with former youth in care and have them share their stories. This is not recommended unless there is someone to hear respectfully from them and take action. The youth should be able to share what they want without sharing any personal stories.

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has put out survey questions about what do First Nations services need to do better. None of it talks about what the INAC mandate is. An uninformed person would not know how to give input in a meaningful way.

Cindy recommends John Milloy's [book](#) *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*, which documents government perspectives from Canada's archives. Some 110 years ago the government knew from a report by Dr. Bryce that conditions in residential schools were responsibility for student death rates of 24% to 69%.

The First Nations Child & Family Caring Society is not funded by the federal government. Within 30 days of filing their human rights claim the federal government cut their funding. FNCFCs has a small operating budget.

**What we can do:**

**Urge the BC government to pass a resolution censuring the federal government for their non-compliance with the tribunal orders.** The Manitoba legislature has passed a unanimous resolution condemning Canada and we can urge our provincial government to pass a similar resolution.

[Bear Witness Day](#) is a special day to raise awareness of Jordan's Principle. Jordan's favourite toy was a stuffed teddy bear. Bring one to your child care, school or workplace on Wednesday, May 10 to honour Jordan's Principle. Take photos and [send](#) to First Nations Child & Family Caring Society.

**Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams heart gardens.** Heart book marks with flower seeds were distributed. You can plant the seeds in them. Find more info at [honouringmemoriesplantingdreams.ca](#)

[Have a Heart Day](#): Send Valentines from children to Prime Minister Trudeau and your MP and host events.

**7 ways to make a difference in under two minutes** – see [website](#)

**Present a screening** of the movie [We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice](#). Contact Donna Cowan through the National Film Board. Inclusion BC may be able to help if First Call hosts a screening through its Disability Pride grants.

**Find resources from the Caring Society on their [website](#)**. They have research, including a report on First Nations child poverty – a colonial construction – and campaign materials and ideas for child and youth engagement, for teachers and others. Videos of the tribunal hearings are available on the [FNCFCS website](#).

The Caring Society makes sure their campaigns cost nothing. They want every child to feel their contribution is valued for who they are.

**Write a public statement on Canada's non-compliance**. First Call can write a public statement detailing our call on the federal government to stop the discrimination and comply with the Human Rights Tribunal orders.

There was consensus around the table to craft a strong statement from the First Call coalition. Offers to help with drafting and reviewing it: BCACCS, Inclusion BC, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, BC Teachers' Federation.

What are Cindy's top three priorities for leveling the play field systemically and institutionally?

1. Government of Canada commits in law to stop racial discrimination against First Nations children.
2. Mandatory training for all civil servants, MPs, MLAs on residential schools and Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action; link job performance measure to TRC implementation.
3. Educate the public: the average person on the street needs to hear we are an apartheid nation. It begins with schools but not exclusively with schools.

## 4. PROVINCIAL ELECTION ADVOCACY

The First Call election toolkit was handed out and is available [online](#). The toolkit has been used by some of our members in their all-candidates meetings. We have sent the questions to the parties and asked for their responses by April 21. [Now available [online](#)]

Roundups of members' election [toolkits](#) and [activities](#) are also available online.

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition is doing vote pop ups (demonstrations) to get low-income people to vote. They are working with community food hubs, food banks and the Carnegie Centre. Please get in touch with Trish [trish@bcpovertyreduction.ca](mailto:trish@bcpovertyreduction.ca) if you want their group to come to your event.

Fostering Change is running a campaign [Supportthe700](#). Ask your candidates to sign the pledge available [online](#). See [who's already signed](#) and they will do a [post-election campaign](#) to hold the ones elected to account. The University Women's Club Study Circle brochure to start a group discussion about youth aging out of foster care was distributed. The Study Circle Kit is available for [download](#).

## 5. BC BUDGET IMPACTS AND INFORMATION

First Call's commentary, "[BC Budget 2017 fails to fill the hole we've dug for children, youth and families.](#)" was published through the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative's *Policy Note* blog. There are kids in school, kids in care, lack of mental health support – generations of kids who have grown up without the supports they needed. Income inequality in BC is the highest in Canada.

The Vancouver School Board has announced further cuts to adult education. There is a rally at the VSB offices on Monday, April 24, 5:30 pm in support of adult education.

Satellite adult education programs at Kiwassa Neighborhood House are affected. Even if the students get grants, they don't have access because programs are closing. Family Services of Greater Vancouver is helping low-income people to access adult education grants.

There is no increase in welfare rates in the BC budget. The Poverty Reduction Coalition is releasing a report with Citizens for Accessible Neighbourhoods with heart-wrenching stories of the impacts on people on disability assistance of inadequate benefit rates at a press conference tomorrow at the BCTF.

## 6. MEMBER UPDATES

**University Women's Club** is holding an election forum at Hycroft Manor, Thursday, April 27, 6-9 pm. They invite women candidates. Their report and guide on Study Circles for youth aging out of care are out and will be [online](#).

**Metro Vancouver Alliance** had an election meeting, with invitations to the party leaders. Christy Clark declined to participate, so it was only John Horgan and Andrew Weaver. About 650 people attended. There were excellent presentations from people about housing, transit, and the CPP clawback from people on disability.

**BC Association for Child Development and Intervention** is working with inclusion BC to create data points to track and measure investments. Some additional money was announced in the provincial budget for services for children with special needs.

**Kiwassa Neighbourhood House:** Organizations with immigrant settlement service contracts have negotiated a new three-year deal with reduced funding. There is no increase in the new federal budget. There is a contraction of service supports for newcomer families. The situation may worsen in September if no new funding comes through.

Canada summer job grants offer employment opportunities for young people and are critical for running summer camps. The allocation is by population size and not through an equity lens. There is concern over this funding.

**Fostering Change:** If there are 15 groups who work through the Fostering Change study circle process, Vancouver Foundation will host another action forum. In this model, youth who shared their stories felt safe enabling a learning dialogue to take place.

**Coalition of BC Child Care Advocates** issued a press release that identified that over the past four years the child care budget has been underspent by \$100 million, \$48 million in the past year alone. The BC government's proposal is to create 8,000 spaces but population has been projected to increase by 18,000 so the number of spaces is not keeping up.

**United Way of the Lower Mainland:** The deadline for submissions for funding support to hold consultations on the national poverty reduction strategy is the end of May. There is a merger underway with the United Way of Lower Mainland and United Way of the Fraser Valley.

**Poverty Reduction Coalition** is holding the third event in their speaker series with Dan Meades, who will speak about the success of the Newfoundland and Labrador poverty reduction strategy on April 27.

BCPRC's election website is [makepovertypublic.ca](http://makepovertypublic.ca). There is a toolkit and an online pledge. There is a "see me" sign opportunity to post on social media.

**Early Childhood Educators of BC's** [annual conference](#) is coming up May 5. Please pick up an [information package](#).

**Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks:** The Insurance Corporation of BC has partnered with FBCYICN to provide youth in care driving lessons and a donated car to use for practice. Visit their [website](#) for applications.

There is \$50,000 in funding province-wide to pay for lessons. Telus is giving 1,000 free phones and two-year phone plans for youth who are accessing lifeskills courses. IBM has donated laptops. [[See government news release](#)]

The Federation is having their next provincial gathering at Evans Lake camp the June 1st weekend. Please share with any youth in care you know.

Celebration of [Youth in Care Week](#) is coming up in June. People can [apply](#) to the Federation to throw a party for young people, funded by Vancouver Foundation.

**PeerNetBC's** spring [workshops](#) started last week, including training on anti-oppression and disability pride. Cost is by sliding scale.

## 8. NEXT MEETING

The next coalition meeting will take place Wednesday, May 10, 2017, 9:15–11:30 am. Refreshments are served at 9 am. BC Teachers' Federation, 550 West 6th Avenue in Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome; please contact us by the Monday before the meeting at [info@firstcallbc.org](mailto:info@firstcallbc.org) if you wish to participate by phone. Bring your teddy bears in honour of Jordan's Principle.



## FIRST CALL OUT AND ABOUT

### Community Presentations March–April 2017

Vancouver Parks Board on the living wage

SFU Institute for Public Education forum

Columbia Institute Leadership Conference on poverty and the living wage

Meeting with Unifor workers on the living wage

Election campaign webinar on poverty and the living wage

### Recent Publications

February: [First Call Submission to the Review of the Representative for Children and Youth Act](#)

February: Op-ed: [Time to make investing in B.C. families our top priorities](#)

March: Op-ed: [BC Budget 2017 fails to fill the hole we've dug for children, youth and families](#)

March: [Letter to Health Minister Terry Lake on Reduction of Child Care Play Space](#)

March: [ECD Roundtable Backgrounder to MCFD Re Federal Child Care Funding](#)

March: [First Call 2017 Provincial Election Toolkit](#)

### Media Hits

Global TV: [MCFD staff rally in Downtown Vancouver to demand change](#)

DreamZZ Punjabi Radio: Poverty Free BC and the living wage

CBC - On the Coast: [Poverty hard on B.C. students and teachers, educator says](#)

Richmond News: [Lower taxes vs. social services shape election debate in Richmond](#)

CKNW AM 980: [How is Canada's middle class doing?](#)

Public Education Network: [Hunger to Learn: Will BC's hungry kids finally receive the hearing and help they need?](#)

East Kootenay News Online Weekly: [Poverty in Cranbrook: A story of social potholes](#)

Vancouver Sun: [Opinion: Who will defend public education?](#)

Vancouver Sun: [BC's working poor: Meet the people whose jobs don't pay the bills](#)

Vancouver Sun: [BC's working poor: Low-wage jobs keep many living paycheque to paycheque](#)

Vancouver Sun: [BC's working poor: Affordable child care key to lifting families out of poverty](#)

Vancouver Sun: [B.C.'s working poor: Affordability crisis hits low-income earners hardest](#)

Times Colonist: [Affordable child care seen as key to lifting families out of poverty](#)

Province: [B.C.'s working poor: Affordability crisis hits low-income earners hardest](#)

Vancouver Sun: [B.C.'s working poor: Reducing poverty expensive, but possible](#)

Times Colonist: [B.C.'s working poor: Reducing poverty expensive but possible](#)