

May 10, 2017

PRESENT:

Anastasia Gaisenok, Check Your Head
Barb Ryeburn, BC Teachers' Federation
Caroline Kent, BC Government and Service Employees' Union
Debbie Anderson Eng, Pacific Community Resources Society
Dylan Falconer, PLEA Community Services
Fionn Yaxley, BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
Gyda Chud, First Call/Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (chair)
Jean Moore, BC Alliance for Mental Health Illness and Addiction

Lou Kawakami, BC Association of Social Workers
Raagini Appadurai, Check Your Head
Rebecca Larder, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
Shari Laliberte, UBC School of Nursing
Simran Sarwara, PeerNetBC
Steve Bailey, BC Retired Teachers' Association
Tara Wolff, Canadian Mental Health Association BC
Trish Garner, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
Vanessa Bui, PeerNetBC
Viveca Ellis, Single Mothers' Alliance of BC
Adrienne Montani, First Call

John Kennedy, First Call
Julie Cheng, First Call
Deanna Ogle, Living Wage for Families Campaign

REGRETS:

Charissa Patricelli, MD
Mab Oloman, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Mary Johnston, Five Family Place Partnership/Eastside Family Place
Sheena Ashdown, Help Foster Kids Now
Sonia Bhatia, BC Society of Transition Houses

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Gyda Chud welcomed everyone and acknowledged we are grateful to meet on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. A round of introductions was made.

2. FIRST CALL UPDATES

As Word Spreads podcast episode 4

John Kennedy gave a quick overview of [episode 4](#) of the *As Word Spreads* podcast. In episode 4, Rachel Malek talks about the Canadian Federation of University Women's [Study Circles](#) project on youth aging out of foster care.

Vancouver Foundation has offered funding to support youth involvement in the *As Word Spread* episodes.

Fostering Change youth policy project

The Vancouver Foundation Fostering Change initiative is winding down. First Call has applied for a develop grant to pick up some of the Fostering Change work. First Call has always wanted to have a youth policy roundtable. The project will bring together coalition members to explore what this new youth engagement model might look like, with a focus on youth aging out of care. We'll explore what is

putting children and youth first

the value add from the First Call coalition.

Living Wage for Families Campaign update

The new living wage rate was released on Apr. 26, 2017, for Metro Vancouver as well as 10 other communities across BC. Housing was an issue in resort communities like Revelstoke and Clayoquot Sound. Child care was also an issue in Clayoquot; they have trouble keeping child care workers living in the community. The impact of the federal Canada Child Benefit income for families helped to lower the living wage rates needed, in spite of rising housing and child care costs.

Campaign to repeal s. 43 of the Criminal Code

First Call has written an [open letter](#) to let all senators know that Bill S-206 has our support. The letter will go out to all First Call coalition member organizations encouraging them to [copy the letter](#) from our website and send it to senators to indicate their support as well.

Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy

First Call has been working with Campaign 2000 to discuss the merits of various measures of poverty and what measure(s) they will recommend to the federal government to use for their poverty reduction strategy. They have a call with Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos on May 12, 2017. They are recommending that the national strategy use the Low Income Measure (LIM) because it measures inequality as well as depth of poverty, and that government improve the Market Basket Measure to be used in a complementary fashion by provinces and communities. Campaign 2000 has come up with a [paper](#) that we'll share with our members. We are also working with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition to plan a BC consultation on the strategy.

Early Childhood Development Roundtable Meeting

Bernard Richard, BC's representative for children and youth, will attend the ECD Roundtable meeting next Wednesday, May 17. Anyone who missed the coalition meeting with him as guest speaker earlier this year are welcome to attend the roundtable with a focus on early childhood.

Letter re access barriers to applying for income assistance

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre's [letter](#) lets the government know how welfare access is excluding people. First Call has signed on to the letter. New barriers require an email address and to sign on to get a PIN. This letter focuses on the new changes, which require a computer and computer literacy.

Another issue we talked with the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation about recently relates to making sure that those who want legal assistance to obtain a child support order can still get this help. But there are new exclusions, such as if the payer is outside the province they are referred to another program. Legal Aid will not take these cases and the ministry workers are not always well-informed about this, making useless referrals for women.

Victoria Day event: Child Poverty Then and Now

A citizens' group in East Vancouver is holding an [event](#) to highlight Victoria Day with a focus on contrasting child poverty in the Victorian era and now. First Call's work will be featured and there will be family games and entertainment. Please pick up a flyer.

Presentations and publications (see end of minutes)

Deanna Ogle's [op-ed](#) on the 2017 living wage rates is available as a handout. First Call was called as a fact checker and has participated on two CBC election panels. Other voices of the coalition have added their voices in the media as well.

Bear Witness Day in honour of Jordan's Principle

Cindy Blackstock highlighted [Bear Witness Day](#) during her April 2017 [coalition meeting presentation](#). There is a handout with background information on Bear Witness Day, which bears witness to all levels of governments' failure to honour [Jordan's Principle](#).

Jordan's Principle is a resolution that all children on reserve get the services they require regardless of which level of government would pay for it. This is not happening in practice and children are being denied life-saving services, in some cases.

3. PROVINCIAL ELECTION POST-MORTEM: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The absentee ballots will be counted later this month and there is potential for recounts for ridings within 200 votes.

The lesson from the Courtenay-Comox riding, with its difference of only nine votes, is that every vote counts and can make the difference between a majority and minority government. The voter turnout was only 57%, while higher than in 2013, is still shockingly low.

We still need to amplify the voices of the people we hear in our communities no matter who is in power. If it looks like a minority government, how do we continue our push for child care, poverty reduction, minimum wage and welfare rate increases, adequate public school investments, better child labour standards and other issues?

We have to get our messages out to the rest of the province. Electoral reform and getting big money out of politics are two issues that the Greens and NDP are aligned on.

4. ANASTASIA GAISENOK AND RAAGINI APPADURAI, CHECK YOUR HEAD: THE YOUTH GLOBAL EDUCATION NETWORK – INCOME INEQUALITY PROJECT AND OTHER COOL STUFF

Check Your Head (CYH) is a youth organization established in 1999 on the wave of the anti-globalization movement where young people came together and said *why aren't we at the table and not organizing?* Their name comes from the Beastie Boys album *Check Your Head*.

[View Check Your Head's presentation](#)

CYH's mission is to educate, activate and empower young people to engage in social, environmental and economic justice movements and to create a more equitable, democratic and sustainable future.

They address three areas of interconnected justice: economic, environmental and social. CYH looks at the people who are affected most. For example, people of colour are most affected by job loss and environmental degradation.

Their work involves educating youth through workshops, activating youth through leadership and mentoring and empowering youth to take action.

They primarily focus on high school students and early university students. They deliver workshops in high school and universities where they are invited. They also do programming at their new location at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre on East Broadway, where they are exploring engaging more deeply with the youth there.

New Economic Justice Project

Economic justice is their focus for the next three years and it is aligned with their inclusion and anti-racism programming. Working in partnership with First Call, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition and Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC office, the project takes an intersectional approach to examining economic justice (class + race + gender + etc.).

The project examines structural root causes (wealth distribution in a capitalistic society), challenges neoliberal narratives (stigma around poverty), looks at proposed solutions (increased minimum wages, living wages, \$10-a-day child care, eliminating MSP fees) and creates space for young people to explore new models and solutions.

Workshops include Income Inequality & Poverty and Global Economic Realities. There is always an education piece then an action piece, building youth leadership to get youth engaged and take action.

One example is their “getting out the vote” party held on May 8, 2017, one day before the BC election. They found out through discussion and activities that the youth were very knowledgeable but disconnected from voting.

Other CYH projects include:

CYH Justice League [website](#). This youth-led website includes blog posts by youth who want their peers to know about the issues they care about.

The Package – Youth are going out in the community to find out what issues are impacting youth the most. They will focus on about five issues and hold politicians accountable to them. They will create an interactive document to spread the word and pass their message on to government. Poverty, cost of housing, cost of living, education fees, income inequality are some of the issues but with a specific youth focus. There will also be a follow-up accountability process.

The first cohort ends in June and the next economic justice cohort will start in fall 2017.

How we can support Check Your Head

- Help promote The Package through our networks
- Connect them with our own youth constituents
- Invite Check Your Head to facilitate a workshop contact@checkyourhead.org

5. CAROLINE KENT, BC GOVERNMENT AND SERVICE EMPLOYEES’ UNION – WHAT IS COMPONENT 3 ANYWAY?

Caroline Kent is an early childhood educator. She represents BCGEU’S Component 3.

The BC Government and Service Employees’ Union is a very [diverse union](#) made up of components. Component 3 is the Community Social Services sector of the BCGEU. The workers in this component support youth and adults with developmental disabilities, Aboriginal communities, women facing domestic violence and youth who are homeless and in conflict with the law, for example.

Virtually every family in BC has been touched by professionals in the community social services sector. Examples of where they work include:

- Transition house workers who help women and children fleeing violence are BCGEU Component 3 workers who may connect with First Call member the BC Society of Transition Houses.
- Community living service workers at the Developmental Disabilities Association
- Family support workers at the Elizabeth Fry Society
- Early childhood educators at YWCA Metro Vancouver and Kelowna Child Care Society

Coalition members are encouraged to go their [website](#) and look at their [worker profiles](#).

Component 3 is one of the largest components in BCGEU. Caroline brings information back from coalition meetings to their provincial networks, e.g., Bear Witness Campaign. They do their own media, taking pictures and sending hashtags. They have their own twitter handle.

Caroline encouraged members to approach Component 3 for funding. They have their own project funds.

First Call coalition is interested in reaching BCGEU members and mobilizing them in support of various child and youth rights campaigns. Hearing the stories from front-line workers is vital to our advocacy work.

6. MEMBER UPDATES

BC Retired Teachers' Association has given out their Golden Star Awards – six \$1,500 awards – to programs that bring together youth and seniors.

Canadian Mental Health Association holds a national community bike ride, [Ride Don't Hide](#). The Vancouver ride is Sunday, June 25 at Swangard Stadium. There are varying ride lengths: 5K, 10K, 60K, 100K. There is another ride in Victoria. It's a family-friendly event. Please consider joining, supporting and spreading the word.

Single Mothers' Alliance of BC launched their [charter challenge](#) with West Coast LEAF and BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre on the lack of Legal Aid funding for single mothers. Before 2002, there were over 15,000 Legal Aid family law cases. After cuts to Legal Aid there are now only 3,000 family law cases per year.

Right now the only family law cases Legal Aid will take is for women escaping extreme domestic violence and who are at very low income. Women working at minimum wage do not qualify. Women's cases are often rejected because the abuse is deemed not severe enough. The issue greatly impacts children. Without access a lawyer, women lose custody and their children get apprehended.

They are beginning their public education on their charter challenge. [Let them know](#) if you'd like to invite them to come talk with your organization.

Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks – Rebecca Larder is in charge of the *Power Pages* newsletter; please connect with her rebeccalarder@fbcyicn.ca if you have any stories.

FBCYICN is holding their youth retreat June 2–4 at Evans Lake, Squamish.

They are organizing events for Youth in Care Week June 3–11, and have funding from Vancouver Foundation to give [bursaries](#) to organizations who want to hold their own events. Check out the BC Children and Youth in Care Week [website](#) for more information.

Application deadline for [Dream Fund bursaries](#) is July 7. This gives funding to youth in foster care through the Reach for Success and Education Achievement bursaries.

7. NEXT MEETING

The next coalition meeting will take place Wednesday, June 14, 2017, 9–11:30 am. Please note early start time. Refreshments are served at 8:45 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 if you wish to participate by phone.

FIRST CALL OUT AND ABOUT

Community Presentations March–April 2017

Columbia Institute on poverty and the living wage

Meeting with Unifor workers on the living wage

Provincial election webinar on poverty reduction, child poverty and the living wage

Vancouver Community College nursing class on First Call, child poverty and income inequality

Recent Publications

April: [Living wage 2017: Metro Vancouver families face increasing child care and housing costs](#)

April: [Deanna Ogle: Living Wage — fill a prescription or fill the gas tank?](#)

April: [Election 2017 party responses to First Call coalition questions](#)

May: [Open Letter Regarding Access Barriers to Applying for Income Assistance](#)

Media Hits

CBC – On the Coast: [Political panel for start of 2017 prov election](#)

Times Colonist: [Trevor Hancock: Child poverty is outrageous and unhealthy](#)

Times Colonist: [Victoria's living wage for young families eases — to \\$71.315](#)

My Prince George Now: [North Central BC's Living Wage eclipses \\$16.39 in 2017](#)

Abbotsford News: [Fraser Valley living wage drops by 38 cents](#)

Metro Vancouver: [Living wage in Metro Vancouver pegged at \\$20.62: report](#)

Province: [Living Wage — fill a prescription or fill the gas tank?](#)

Revelstoke Mountaineer: [Study: Revelstoke's 'living wage' is fourth highest in B.C.](#)

Revelstoke Current: [A living wage in Revelstoke. Do you earn \\$18.77 an hour](#)

Sooke Online Daily Pocket News: [Living Wage in the CRD hovers around \\$20/hour](#)

Revelstoke Times Review: [Revelstoke's living wage amongst highest in B.C.](#)

Globe and Mail: [A growing divide](#)

CBC Early Edition: [Softwood lumber and child poverty: Were Clark's debate claims accurate?](#)

Vancouver Sun: [Fact check: Liberals says child poverty down by half, but experts question the claim](#)