

### Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief summary of First Call's activities and accomplishments to our coalition partner organizations and the public. First Call is a non-partisan coalition of provincial and regional organizations. Our mission is to mobilize British Columbians to work together to ensure our children and youth have the rights, opportunities and resources required to achieve their full potential. We believe all children and youth in BC should have first call on society's resources. The coalition welcomed four new partner organizations in 2010, bringing our total list of partners to 95!

### Advocacy Projects

First Call's *Four Keys to Success for Children and Youth* continue to provide a strong framework for our advocacy.

#### A Strong Commitment to Early Childhood Development

Provincial early years policy has continued to straddle the responsibilities of several ministries, with a growing role for education. The Early Childhood Development Roundtable has continued to provide a forum for dialogue with government and across sectors in the community. Partnership with staff from key ministries, such as MCFD, was strengthened in 2010.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum, a First Call coalition partner, has wound down after a decade of advocacy efforts emphasizing child care as a solution, and contributed its remaining resources to the First Call ECD Roundtable.

#### Increased Economic Equality

The annual BC child poverty report card was published in November with the participation of many coalition partners in the development of the report, at the news conference, and in the dissemination of the report. First Call has become an opinion leader on child poverty, which is now a commonly discussed issue in the provincial legislature, in the provincial party leadership races, and in the media. First Call's research on child poverty is regularly cited by the Representative for Children and Youth, MLA's and coalition partner organizations, as well as in academic studies.

As part of the Coalition's work around child and family poverty, First Call continued to provide leadership as host of the Living Wage for Families

In May 2010, a delegation from First Call presented to the **Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth** at an all day meeting on child poverty. The meeting was held in response to a request from the Representative for Children and Youth that the committee take the lead in producing a child poverty plan. **First Call's Chair, Julie Norton**, told the Committee:

*"For over a decade we have been publishing the Child Poverty Report Card... Child and youth poverty is a significant issue. Children are only young once... Eliminating poverty is a major challenge. We're asking you to tackle it and start to address it and set realistic targets for its reduction."*

Campaign. In 2010 the campaign certified the first twelve Living Wage Employers in Metro Vancouver, and New Westminster became Canada's first living wage municipality. Outreach for this campaign was extensive, and included audiences with unions, social service groups, city councils, and community advocates. A successful roundtable event was held in May, and work continues on living wage employer adjudication and recognition, municipal outreach, research with low wage immigrant workers, and general public education and organizing around the living wage.

As part of our ongoing campaign on the issue of Refugee Transportation Loans, First Call surveyed BC Members of Parliament to determine if they supported the elimination of interest-bearing loans to government-assisted refugees for their travel to Canada. First Call was also the provincial partner in Campaign 2000's summer lobby of MPs, which focused on poverty reduction and affordable housing.

From The Province, November 25, 2010  
"121,000 BC kids live in poverty"

*Teary-eyed Reyna Izaguirre says she is almost overwhelmed by a life of poverty with her two boys. The Vancouver single mom is sick of being stuck at home on welfare and living on handouts.*

*"I would like to have dreams like everybody else," Izaguirre said Wednesday at a news conference to highlight alarming rates of child poverty in B.C. "I'm on income assistance, but I want to get out as soon as possible," she said. "I want to have a normal life. I want a good childhood for my kids."*

*Izaguirre's boys, a three-year-old with autism and a five-year-old in kindergarten, are among 121,000 B.C. children living in poverty.*

*The 2010 Child Poverty Report Card says one in every seven B.C. children lived in poverty in 2008, the most recent year for which Statistics Canada data is available. The numbers, released by First Call: B.C. Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, show B.C.'s child-poverty rate improved to 14.5 per cent, but advocates predict the economic downturn in 2009-10 will have further squeezed low-income earners...*

## Support in Transitions from Childhood to Youth to Adulthood

First Call worked with coalition partner The Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks to produce ***Belonging 4 Ever: Creating Permanency for Youth in and from Care***, a report which involved a literature review and formal discussions with young people to create suggestions for improvements to BC's performance in protecting the right to permanency for children and youth in care.

## Safe and Caring Communities

A special meeting was held with coalition partners and other interested parties to discuss BC's contribution to Canada's third report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, regarding Canada's progress on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. First Call forwarded materials from this meeting to contribute to the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children's national alternative report, which will be submitted to the UN Committee.

First Call launched a website ([nochildlabour.org](http://nochildlabour.org)) for a specific campaign to improve employment standards for young people working in BC, including a demand to raise the work start age from 12 and increase safety protections. This campaign emerged from a report on injury rates of young people in the workplace that First Call released in 2009. First Call representatives are now taking these issues into the work of the newly-formed Employment Standards for the Next Decade Coalition.

## Public Education and Events

### Events and Outreach

Our monthly coalition meetings are one of the primary ways that First Call stays connected with our partners to share new ideas and gather input into our priorities. Partner organizations contributed to hosting coalition meetings on topics including provincial budget cuts; immigration and settlement trends; impacts of poverty on education; child labour; and alcohol and drug use among youth. Dialogues at coalition meetings engaged government, opposition MLA's, the Representative for Children and Youth, coalition partners, and other community members and advocates. Coalition meetings and Early Childhood Development Roundtables engaged over 400 people in 2010.

22 workshops and presentations were given by First Call in 2010, and an additional 28 outreach events were conducted for the Living Wage for Families campaign, reaching a total of over 1500 individuals. Advocacy skills workshops and presentations on child and family poverty were held for SFU health policy students, BCIT nursing students, UNBC social work students, municipal social planning committees, Langara social welfare students, UBC injury prevention students, Vancouver School Board, and the provincial Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth and Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

In October, we held our annual fundraising dinner, *First Call for the Children*. This year, we presented an award of excellence to the **Honourable Ted Hughes**, retired judge and amazing advocate for children and youth in this province.

First Call was thrilled to receive an **Award of Excellence in Advocacy** in 2010 from the Representative for Children and Youth for our commitment and hard work on behalf of BC's vulnerable children and youth!

### Communications and Social Media

First Call launched a Twitter account in April 2010 (@FirstCallBC), reaching over 100 followers by the end of the year. The Twitter feed is used to share timely news with coalition partner organizations, politicians and the media.

We continue to receive positive feedback about the usability and resourcefulness of our website, which saw 15,000 unique visitors and 28,000 page loads in 2010. We work hard to keep the First Call website current with unique content. First Call's weekly e-mail newsletter now reaches 2000 people directly and is forwarded to many others.

From a community member:

*Just wanted to let you know that from my perspective you are providing a REALLY valuable service with the weekly announcements. I'm so busy and as a consultant, I don't attend meetings unless they are related to a particular project. AND there is so much going on! I would be totally out of the loop if it wasn't for your weekly "roundup".*

First Call contributed articles for partner newsletters and other publications, participated in 53 interviews with various media outlets, and recorded over 60 media hits in 2010. Of particular note, a 12-part series in *The Province*, titled "Our Growing Challenge," focused on giving kids in BC a better start and featured extensive coverage of child poverty and early childhood development issues.

## Administration

First Call received a small grant from Coast Capital Savings to complete a five year strategic plan. The plan will focus on providing a framework to assist with setting priorities for strategic activities in support of First Call's mission and goals; improved communication and involvement of our partner organizations; and organizational stability. A draft plan will be presented to the coalition in spring 2011.

### **2010 Coordinating Committee**

Lianne Carley  
Gyda Chud  
Jocelyne Hamel  
Jocelyn Helland  
Elsie Kipp  
Karen Lai  
Helesia Luke  
Cheryl Mixon  
Adrienne Montani  
Dr. Jean Moore  
Julie Norton (Chair)

The Coalition's budget in 2010-11 was \$223,000. Funding was provided by Vancouver Foundation, United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancity, Coast Capital Savings, and contributions from our coalition partners and individual donors.

The First Call office continues to operate with a small staff of two, in addition to the .8 FTE Living Wage for Families Campaign Organizer.

Our volunteer program expanded in 2010, with three student volunteers and practicum students providing research, communications and administrative support while having an opportunity to build their skills. We continue to rely on expert volunteers on our coordinating committee and through our coalition partners to contribute to major projects, including the writing of the Child Poverty Report Card.