

National Children's Alliance
Annual National Symposium

*“Advocacy:
Improving the Lives of Children and Youth”*

Kananaskis, Alberta
March 24-26 2004

A. Introduction

The National Children's Alliance (Alliance) hosted a two day meeting March 24-26 in Kananaskis, Alberta. The objectives of the symposium were to:

- ✓ Learn about challenges to the health and well-being of Aboriginal children and to understand how all children can be helped to reach their potential through community services, infrastructure, partnerships, public policy and advocacy; and
- ✓ Develop strategies and policy options in order to advocate for change to improve the lives of children.

Seventy participants representing national, provincial and local voluntary sector organizations working with children and families attended the symposium. A participant list is appended.

B. Proceedings

Thank the Creator for this day. And ask him to watch over us and our children at home and to have a productive and happy day". Bill Gillespie

B.1. Setting the Stage

Dianne Bascombe, Executive Director of the Alliance welcomed everyone on behalf of the Symposium Working Group and provided an overview of the Alliance and set the context for the Symposium. She highlighted the unique features of the Alliance and reviewed its goals and objectives.

a) Background of the Alliance

Approximately fifty eight member organizations came together to develop policy and to advocate for the purpose of contributing to the federal agenda as it relates to children and youth issues.

The Alliance's goals are to

1. Facilitate dialogue with government on children's issues;
2. Strengthen the network of national voluntary organizations and NGO's;
3. Develop policy recommendations;
4. Engage provincial/territorial/regional constituent organizations in working collaboratively on issues; and
5. Promote the development and implementation of national children's agenda.

The Alliance is a cross-sectoral and broad coalition with members from the health, education, literacy, environment, early childhood, and medical sectors. It works on issues that cut across all organizations, cultures and communities. The Alliance is 'anti structural'

in that the work of its members are supported by a small secretariat of two staff positions through funding provided by Social Development Canada.

The Alliance works as a collective based on consensus. In developing any new initiative or plan of action it is important to understand that decision-making is made within the operating principles of:

- Respect for independence and collaboration
- Focus on issues that can be better addressed collectively, rather than individually
- Focus on outcomes
- Maintain an open table with respect and goodwill
- Keep room at the table for critical thinking and disagreement
- Speak as a collective only when a consensus has been reached
- Keep government and media interventions strategic
- Manage input and consultation effectively

A full description of the Alliance is posted on the Alliance site at: www.nationalchildrensalliance.com

b) The Context of the Symposium

In contrast to the lives experienced by other Canadian children and youth, Aboriginal children are more likely to experience poverty, health problems, maltreatment, incarceration, low rates of educational success, and placement in child welfare systems. The numbers of children in care are increasing in Canada and the problem is particularly acute for Aboriginal children. Although the latter represents less than five percent of the child population in Canada, they account for at least thirty percent of Canada's children in care. From 1996 through 2001 it is estimated that the numbers of Aboriginal children in care increased by seventy-one percent.

Federal and provincial/territorial funding formulas need to ensure adequate flexibility and levels of resources to Aboriginal child and family service agencies and other community supports. In the case of First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies this would mean implementing the recommendations arising from the First Nations Child and Family Services Joint National Policy Review published in June 2000. This includes the recommendation that funding formulas need to be revised to ensure adequate levels of resources to Aboriginal community services and supports for children and families.

c) Focus of the Symposium

Dianne Bascombe said that: “We are here together to find ways to collaborate with Aboriginal mandated organizations using an Aboriginal lens”; and that the Alliance always looks to consider issues founded upon evidence based advocacy, and about issues have been front and centre on the Alliance table for the past two years. A day of dialogue in October 2003 set the foundation for moving the Alliance’s work forward in relation to Aboriginal children and youth issues.

“The Symposium is the start of a long term journey, and today we have the opportunity to learn and through dialogue; grapple to understand the issues which will help us identify policy initiatives to move Aboriginal children and youth issues forward.”

Dianne Bascombe.

By the time sessions finish, it is hoped that concrete policy has been developed, and options, ways and means for all of us to have an impact on upcoming policy development opportunities.

The speeches and slide decks of the Symposium presenters are all available on the NCA website: www.nationalchildrensalliance.com

B.2. Day One: Thursday March 25, 2004

“Improving the Lives of Children and Youth: An Aboriginal Lens”

The overall objective of the day was to learn about challenges to the health and well-being of aboriginal children and to understand how all children can be helped to reach their potential through community services, infrastructure, partnerships, public policy and advocacy.

Overview of Training Day

Cindy Blackstock began the proceedings with the highlights of the training day, which focused on how can we better care for Aboriginal children in care. Cindy said that she had received excellent feedback and looked forward to working with more voluntary organizations throughout the project. Of note, pilots are to be launched on six communities across Canada. As part of the training, the participants completed a ‘vision quest’, which resulted in a mission statement and artwork that depicted the vision as a way of creating a more inclusive world for aboriginal and other children in Canada.

Cindy is a member of the Gitksan Nation and is the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFCFS).

Opening Keynote Speaker

John Milloy was the symposium’s opening keynote speaker. His presentation was titled: “Community, Children and Capacity” and it is available in full on the NCA website.

John spoke as a historian and by “walking backwards into the future” he looked at social welfare policy, communities and policy-makers and social workers in the period 1940 to 1980; and the many issues of, for example, fostering and adoption of children during that time. John noted that these children “became neglected step children and were kept in perpetual wardship”, all which resulted in a state of dependence and huge health and income problems.

Most affected were Aboriginal children. By 1906 goals that had been set by officials were unable to be achieved as the abuses and health problems broke in a storm of litigation in 1986.

He spoke of the issues surrounding residential schools and the church, the Brice Report; the role of Indian Affairs, the RCMP, the Children’s Aid Society; and the continued

John teaches history and Native studies at Trent University. His book, A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986, is based on his research for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which helped lead to the federal public apology in 1998 for the harm done by the residential school system.

assault on communities and children with the removal of thousands of Aboriginal children from their families.

John then turned his comments to the future, and how, although there is a resistance to change the future lie on building communities of common cause and a community of collaboration. Aboriginal action and cooperation is where we need to start.

Keynote Questions

Q: How could this happen in silence?

A: Noise was being made inside Indian Affairs, in that there were whistle blowers, mainly women, but no one seemingly either wanted to do something about it or didn't know how. Complaints would go to the Department and then to the Church, who in turn said that there were no real problems. The mystery was not the silence; it was in the not doing anything about it. They wouldn't give out any information because it was explosive material.

Q: In your research did you have access to provincial records?

A: No, children in care disappeared. Hypocrisy and lack of funding were the real shocking things. It was an open secret in the department.

Q: Why were the whistle blowers in effective?

A: Whistle blowers, who were in the main Indian Agents and women from the church, were written off or got rid of by Indian Affairs. Public denial and private correction was the solution.

It was noted by a participant that First Nations persons, Métis and those of mixed blood were also in these schools, and because they didn't get funding so they became servants. These groups are 'reclaiming their voice'.

Panel Discussion: Advocacy by Using Research to Tell the Story

The objective of the panel session was to enhance advocacy by using research to tell the story of how our children are doing.

The panellists were: Cindy Blackstock, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (FNCFS); Ginger Gosnell, Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council; and Karen Edwards, Edmonton Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The panel moderator was Maggie Fietz.

Panellist Presentation Highlights

Cindy Blackstock: Nations Child and Family Caring Society: 'How are Aboriginal Children doing?'

Cindy provided a number of statistics and information that indicated that, in this last year of the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Peoples; Aboriginal children are not doing very well, at all.

- There is between 22,500 and 28,000 First Nations children in the care of the Canadian child welfare system, three times the number that attended residential schools in the 1940's.
- According to government of Canada data the number of First Nations children in care resident on reserve increased by 71.5% nationally between 1995 and 2001.
- Census data suggests the North American Indian child population decreased 1% during this same time period

FNCFSA agencies are working with communities to ensure children can be safely cared for at home, but as a government report completed three years ago found funding for preventative and community development services is inadequate, nothing has changed.

Cindy spoke of contrasting community supports, in that there is very little evidence of voluntary sector support or services. Everything is funded on population count, not need or history, and the Voluntary Sector Initiative study results, which FNCFSA identify poverty, neglect and substance misuse as key concerns on reserve. Data that compared Aboriginal and non Aboriginal children found that neglect was twice as likely to be the primary form of maltreatment in Aboriginal families, that Aboriginal caregivers were more likely to live in poverty, move more often, and to abuse alcohol, that Aboriginal children functioned approximately on par with non Aboriginal children, and that Aboriginal children were twice as likely to be placed in care.

The National Policy Review, AFN/DIAND study found that FNCFSA goals of self determination in child welfare should be supported in a new formula, that targeted prevention services were inadequately funded; that special needs services for children required additional support and that there needed to be better coordination between legislation and funding.

What this meant for children living off reserve: impacted access to health care, education, parks and recreation, arts/culture, social services, employment and housing opportunities; and for those living on reserve: access to some band services but limited provincial services, and the issues of poverty, housing crisis, and high unemployment.

Cindy is a member of the Gitksan Nation and is the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFCS).

She has worked in the field of child and family services for over twenty years, being a social worker for the provincial government as well as for a First Nations child and family service agency and Executive Director of the Caring for First Nations Children Society in British Columbia.

For more information about the ‘Caring Across the Boundaries Project, the Full research report is available on line at www.fncfcs.com.

Cindy concluded with ways that the members of the Alliance could help:

- Participate in Caring Across the Boundaries training sessions to learn how to work respectfully in a mutually beneficial way with First Nations.
- Sign our petition asking Prime Minister Martin to ensure every child in Canada has equal benefit under child welfare law.
- Learn more about how to support FNCFSA – visit our databases on line at www.fncfcs.com

“In many ways thing have not got better. We need to learn about our history, be courageous and be loud”.

Ginger Gosnell, Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council: ‘Connecting Aboriginal Youth Policy and Programming’

The Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council works with young people to create Youth Caucus (with no funding). Forty nations were participating at this point.

Ginger noted: “We know the problems, we are working on solutions. It’s hard to let go of the problems but we need to move forward and to look at affirming solutions”. Her research looked at connections and the impact this has on youth, as well as holistic policy making. Early childhood development and post secondary education is the big solution, as is having Aboriginal youth involved in design and delivery of projects, rather non Aboriginal adults telling them how to do things.

Ginger is from the Nisga’a and Kwagiulth Nations in BC. Her priorities lie in the advancement of Aboriginal rights in Canada and inclusion of Aboriginal youth in that process, and by actively participating in the Assembly of First Nations, Liberal Party of Canada, 1st Nations Youth Caucus, and Urban Native Youth Association.

In addition, a solution is to connect programs, partners, and funding needed for supports. There are problems with fitting main stream funds, as for example, reserves are not eligible.

The Council has developed a Social Vision Statement, and is working on youth development training based on the medicine wheel. The First Nations National Youth Council looks forward to collaborating and sharing leadership training program and other work we are doing in British Columbia to raise next generation in truth.

Karen Edwards, Edmonton Big Brothers and Big Sisters: ‘The Path to Programming’:

Working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities is a key in the design, development, evaluation and dissemination of responsive community based health research.

A Big Brothers Big Sisters and Community-University Partnerships research project was initiated to explore community-based mentoring practices and programs to inform the development of a mentoring program for Aboriginal children & youth.

The data said that there were differences between the two approaches, in that the western approach, youth need strong role models, that role modeling plays an important role in personal development, that mentors play a kin-like role, and that a pair or one-on-one structure is used.

The study indicated that Aboriginal mentoring approaches also said that youth need strong role models, and that role modeling is important for children’s personal development. However, the whole community is responsible for raising children, mentoring holds a holistic worldview, it involves oral traditions and interactive learning and group mentoring. The study results said that without involvement of family, a mentoring program would fail.

Considerations for a mentoring program included:

- using Aboriginal mentors for Aboriginal youth or provide support for cross-cultural mentoring;
- having a screening process but perhaps using different approaches for Aboriginal mentors; instituting community training programs to increase the number of role models in the community;
- Building on existing programs and strengths and avoid duplication
- Using recreation as the vehicle for mentoring process
- Youth serving as peer mentors
- Providing transportation.

As a result of this work, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, through the Youth Strategies, Alberta Children Services received \$150,000 for four pilot projects to develop mentoring programs. In addition, the Ministries involved in the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative have all added mentoring for children and youth to their business plans, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters are sharing what was learned with Big Brothers and Big Sisters Canada to influence future program development.

Karen Edwards is the research coordinator for the Alberta ACADRE Network at the University of Alberta. The ACADRE Network works with Aboriginal communities to develop community-based health research projects through facilitation, training, building partnerships, accessing resources (financial or knowledge based) and mentoring.

Following protocol and awareness of protocol was important, as was how you do it.

Panel Questions & Comments:

‘I think it’s more appropriate to consider connecting them to their appropriate cultures. Native children in care may be placed in multiple homes with multiple different cultures, including Spanish or some other diverse cultural setting. If you’re going to try to connect [them], if they could get back to their own language, traditions, and even their family roots, so not to confuse our children anymore’.

“We are working with reserve groups to seek common strategies. One was a pilot on a reserve with a 90% crime rate. We did a training program and within one year the crime rate dropped to 10% using Inter agency groups. That’s how successful it was. The difference is that our mentoring project is on-reserve.

Maggie Fietz thanked the panellists for allowing the Symposium participants to hear about the needs expressed in a challenging and moving way.

Dialogue Session

Dianne Bascombe, in her introduction to the dialogue session said that: the panel discussion reflected the response of the symposium participants to the “blindness, the deafness around these issues, and the gap between rhetoric and existing public policy.” She also noted that we are now more aware of the issue of residential schools and the real policy implications that arose from the panellist’s presentations and that the lack of data until 1998 around our child welfare system contributed to the blindness around the issues. As well, this has been compounded by lack of funding for child services.

The morning’s messages were clear, in that we do not focus on the problem, but move forward on solutions and develop what public policy funding solutions are needed. Regardless of the community, we need to focus on teaching within the community we reside, and we need community involvement and supports.

In introducing the questions for the group discussions, Dianne asked the participants to keep in mind what might the policy options or changes be that are needed to move forward.

Questions for Discussion:

- What surprised you about the issues raised by the panel presentations?
- How do community infrastructure and assets impact upon the health and well-being of Aboriginal children and youth?
- What are the ways in which the voluntary sector can assist in addressing the issues raised by the panellists?
- What are the implications for public policy?
- With the upcoming federal election, what should we ask for?

Group Discussion Summary Points

So how do you take these from being problems and move them in a policy framework and solutions?

- To be effective we need far greater education of how the civic system works and to advocate and lobby as a group
- What does it take to shift perception so the human element prevails?
- Invest in learning.
- Reach around government to reach the people
- Use native-centered or defined words to discuss issues with media and when lobbying
- Voluntary sector needs to play a role in the solutions. This is a humanitarian and Canadian issue, not an Aboriginal issue.
- Advocate for Aboriginal youth regardless of where they live.
- Deliver a collective message.
- The voluntary sector needs to adopt the consciousness of working with Aboriginal organizations and their issues, and these need to be integrated in the fabric of our
- organizations, as the NCA reaches millions of Canadians.
- In terms of community infrastructure and health, Nunavut is still limited.
- Human, financial and community programming for children must be strengthened.
- Children need the freedom to dream, and this is accomplished through a stronger community. If adults can't see a future, how can the children?
- We need to flip trend towards risk management and quality management
- Voluntary sector and the NCA is a very powerful voice so let's use it. Pick one issue, for example, children in care and make a difference on a number of levels
- Strengthen community-based strategies, including strengthening single mothers and families (in a broad sense) through mentoring
- Let's create youth programs and services that have a stake in their own future!
- Partnerships & collaborations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations. What is preventing us from doing this? We need to overcome fear.
- We need for resource collaboration between voluntary sector and Aboriginal groups
- Finding ways to tackle and collaboration on common problems, as the unified voice is harder to ignore
- This topic is very difficult and the issues very complicated and long standing (i.e. poverty, inequality of access)
- We have the research; we now need to support community action. We have theist, we need action!
- Is it the role of voluntary sector to support and empower Aboriginal community action and capacity (services)?
- How does Aboriginal community want the voluntary section to support them?
- The boundaries of organizational scope may be beyond supporting Aboriginal groups and communities?
- We could position collective around support for 'community'.
- The need for knowledge, awareness /consciousness raising, focusing on accomplishments and recognize progress in the issues
- The importance of coalition: building the collegiate voice, not working in isolation,

- Breaking the code or voice of silence by providing more history, teaching about Aboriginal groups, needs and cultures, history
- We can learn from this past to help government identify outcomes (i.e. stats of reserves)
- We need to articulate future outcomes.
- We need to have a unified voice with the Aboriginal community to address issues, to be change maker, and pressure government to identify outcomes (i.e. UN outcome indicators)
- Victimization can be both empowering and disempowering depending upon how they play out – i.e. concluding that problem is too vast and paralyzing (i.e. issue of childhood obesity and temptation for quick fixes)
- From a public policy perspective, understanding the complexity of the issues and recognizing our propensity to repeat mistakes. The best way to avoid mistakes engaging in common sense discussions and understanding before we move ahead to resolve problems.

Surprises:

- By the disconnect between perception of the funding money that goes to Aboriginal communities and the lack of services
- That Canada is in consistent violation of many laws, for example the Charter of Human Rights and Rights of the Individual and UN Declarations.
- Not very surprised about issues, but very surprised about the lack of data about the number of children in care and the enormity of the child welfare population (i.e. increased number of children in care now that the days of residential schools).
- The barriers faced (i.e. accessibility issues for organizations to access existing resources/funding) for Aboriginal peoples
- We were struck by parallels between past and present (i.e. residential schools and reserves), government is well aware of issues and still not doing anything (i.e. child welfare); outcomes are also similar in that they are poorly articulated, as well there are the jurisdictional issues of paralysis.

Thursday Afternoon Panel: The Role of Community Services

Objective: To explore the role of community services in improving the lives of Aboriginal children and youth

The panellists were: Christa William –Director, First Nations Education Steering Committee; Alfred Gay –National Association of Friendship Centres; and Tina Martin, Assembly of First Nations.

Moderator: Harvey Weiner

Christa Williams, First Nations Education Steering Committee

Christa's presentation was about the integration of services, in that the issue was that aboriginal parents and service providers have consistently pressed for programs that address the physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual growth of children.

Christa Williams is a member of the Nlaka'pamux Nation. For the past eight years Christa has acted as the Executive Director for the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC).

One of the barriers to achieving this, however, was the lack of coordination and communication between agencies and issues that are clearly connected. Integration of services means bringing down artificial barriers among our respective fields and working together in ways that are better coordinated and more efficient. The result is the delivery of better quality of services to individuals, families and communities. The First Nations Education Steering Committee is committed to working with First Nations communities and service organizations to coordinate the delivery of fundamental programs. Of note, Aboriginal parents and service providers have consistently pressed for programs that address the physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual growth of children. One of the barriers to achieving this, however, has been the lack of coordination and communication between agencies and issues that are clearly connected.

Christa relayed the recent accomplishments and activities of the Steering Committee and examples of where organizations in British Columbia have coordinated services to communities. For example, in July of 2000 FNESC co-hosted an Integration of Services Forum in 2002 after which a new partner came on board: The BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society. The forum brought forward a number of challenges, considerations and priorities that will lead into the next forum in 2004.

Alfred Gay, National Association of Friendship Centres

Alfred spoke to the strategic direction of the National Association Of Friendship Centres (NAFC), which is: to be active in issues relating to aboriginal specific programming for children between the ages 6 - 12 yrs old, and to address the persistence of child hunger and food insecurity in urban aboriginal families.

Alfred is a Policy Analyst at the National Association of Friendship Centres.

Alfred noted the appointment of the Honourable John Godfrey, Minister of State for Cities, and reviewed his involvement and support in child development issues and initiatives. He noted that the "have" and "do not have" amongst the aboriginal family, first nation, Métis and Inuit has been allowed to persist for far too long, and that it is time for all government to meet their domestic and international commitments and obligations.

The organization is committed to grassroots community development, and believes that

evidence exists that suggests that no expense be spared in investing in the future of urban aboriginal children and their families. Options for consideration to move the agenda forward included the rigorous enforcement of the accountability provisions set forth in existing agreements; Canada Social Transfer, Canada Health Transfer, Social Union Framework that support child development activities; and building upon existing commitments in the multilateral framework for early childhood development.

Alfred concluded by saying that Friendship centres must be included in the design, delivery and administration of initiatives that address early childhood development and child focused programs, services and supports.

The challenges faced by aboriginal children and their families are enormous. It is how we address these challenges will define the character of our nation today and into the future.

Tina Martin, Assembly of First Nations

Tina's presentation focused on the relationships and policy considerations for First Nation children and the volunteer sector. She first gave an overview of AFN structure and processes as well as the AFN "Getting Results" strategy", the purpose of which is to get results on transformative changes that recognize and empower First Nations Governments and improve the economic prospects and social conditions of all First Nations people.

Tina Martin is an Ojibway from the Wikwemikong First Nation and has a keen interest in First Nations health. She is a policy analyst with the Assembly of First Nations Health Secretariat.

She discussed the similarities in goals, principles, and activities such as advocacy and policy development between the AFN and the NCA, and how the NCA could help support the "Getting results" strategy. Her suggestion of a first step was to engage in joint lobby efforts

Panel Questions

Q: What learning's can we bring into this NCA process?

A: Dependant upon the quality of leadership in the community and degree of involvement of Aboriginals in any community, some communities are open to collaboration, others aren't. Step away from individual needs

Q: What recommendation could you offer to us to begin assist you?

A: Aboriginal communities need to know what they want, we always seek out self determination, and so NCA will have to listen to the Aboriginal community. Ask yourself from policy or position papers how you could seek out and help? Stepping forward and then getting into dialogue and brainstorming to figure out where the opportunities are would be beneficial to both groups.

Harvey Weiner closed the panel discussion by noting the many accomplishments in some communities. He reminded the participants about political statements made by the Prime Minister, and that the panel gave much food for thought and a call to action for more in depth dialogue into the future. This and the building of connections between AFN and NCA have us all very hopeful.

Group Dialogue Session: Advocating for Change at home

Moderator: Dianne Bascombe

Questions for Discussion:

- What kinds of supports are needed most to improve the lives of Aboriginal children and youth, both on and off reserve? What makes a community more liveable for an Aboriginal child? What kind of community do Aboriginal children want?
- How do community, health and social supports make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal children and youth?
- Can your organization give specific examples of successful programs and supports it has provided? What do you need in order to achieve success?
- How can community partnerships in service delivery create the momentum for changes to improve the supports for all children, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal?
- What role can service providers play in advocating for improvements to community services for children?

Group Discussion Summary Points

<p><i>So how do you take these from being problems and move them in a policy framework and solutions?</i></p>

Report Backs:

- With all due respect, ask the community.
- Children want safety, security, a sense of community, the opportunity to learn, to be successful at school and to see themselves in the school curriculum, to be part of a community that has high expectations for their children and supports them. Communities become love liveable when they have sufficient resources and equitable supports for families and parents. Communities are more liveable also with stable government and where there is more control over the sateen, where the community manages to own resources, and makes their own decision. Communities need an internal accountability process for their leaders. Youth leaders come through much stronger process to hold their leaders accountable.
- Supports have made a difference, for example: Chandler's research in British Columbia that showed a huge decrease in suicide in communities that had cultural based education, health care and child welfare program, women in government, tribal police and fire

persons, and were further along in self government. These communities had little to no suicides. This research is consistent with other countries in Aboriginal or indigenous communities.

- Successful projects have been where support is provided to communities to re-engage, to be in charge, to design and to exercise leadership.
- Support mothers and primary care workers.
- Provide community based services.
- Strengthen families.
- Divert money spent on child welfare.
- Works toward accountability from INAC down to see where the money goes and what needs are not being funded at all.
- Continue with events such as the NCA Symposium to strengthen alliances and networks.
- Strengthen links between direct and non direct service organizations.
- The NCA should advocate around one key issue at a time.
- These are complex issues. We need to examine different levels of the issue and look at a number of different aspects and approaches.
- Continue with workshops.
- Use sport, like a program one group has with the Vancouver Canucks.
- Need for peer support and peer mentorship, someone who has had the experiences emphasize the system of support throughout generations
- It is critical to have a meaningful voice for Aboriginal youth to be involved in the decision making process.

Closing Speaker

Veronica Dewar, President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association of Canada: “Advocacy on behalf of indigenous peoples at the international level: the Arctic Council process”.

Veronica provided a brief introduction of Pauktuutit, shared some of the many issues that face today’s Inuit children and youth in Canada and across circumpolar nations, and touched on some of the ways we have responded to these challenges.

Pauktuutit is committed to advocating for social change that will improve life for Inuit women, their children and their communities. There is an on-going and severely under-addressed crisis in social housing for Inuit, so growing numbers of Inuit children continue to be disadvantaged in ways that will impact them throughout their lives. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), traditional midwifery, maternal and infant care and pre-natal programs, teen pregnancy, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and child sexual assault are among their many child-related programs. The needs of Inuit children in urban areas are also of great concern.

It would be difficult to overstate the effect on our children of the fact of our culture changing in less than fifty years from an isolated, family-based economy based on subsistence hunting

and seasonal relocation, to population migration from small communities to regional centres and an economy of wage earning employment and living in permanent housing.

It has become obvious that if we are to truly assess the damage and implement many more results-driven programs, financial and human resources must be increased. If we are to identify effective opportunities for beneficial legislative and public policy intervention we must get on the radar of the governments and policy-makers, the funders and advocates - raise awareness across the country of this little-known and no longer acceptable secret in the north.

One of the tools we need to use more to help us 'get on the radar' is solid scientific information, statistical confirmation to validate accounts of the critical circumstances facing Inuit and especially Inuit children. The Arctic Council also plays this role. It was formed in 1996 to improve circumpolar cooperation to promote the economic, social and cultural well-being of Northern people.

Panel Questions & Comments:

- We have a burgeoning population so there will not be enough jobs if retirement age (policy) is increased.
- There is a need for more early childhood development and child care.

Janice Douglas thanked Veronica for providing a clear context for the situation, issues and solutions in play in the North.

End of Day One Agenda

B.3. Day Two: Friday March 26, 2004

“Improving the Lives of Children and Youth: A Public Policy Lens”
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Overall Objective for the Day: To develop common strategies and policy options in order to advocate for change to improve the lives of children, in particular for the upcoming federal election.

Panel Discussion: “Lessons from advocacy on behalf of vulnerable populations”

Objective: *To learn about strategies and techniques from those who advocate on behalf of vulnerable populations*

The panelists were: Wahida Valiante, Canadian Islamic Congress; Nick Summers, Canadian Council for Refugees; Rose McCarney, Street Kids International; and Janis Douglas, Canadian Association for Community Living.

Moderator: Sandra Griffin

**Wahida Valiante, Canadian Islamic Congress:
‘Children: Our Most Valuable Resource’**

Wahida spoke about the issues that are facing the children of Muslim communities, particularly in the face of the impact of the tragic events of September 11, 2001 on young Canadian Muslim children. In many instances, societal violation of their security and sense of belonging has led children to experience acute anxiety, fear, isolation, and loss of self identity. In trying to escape such negative feelings, vulnerable children may develop faulty mechanisms for coping and become withdrawn, overly aggressive, anxious, or engage in self-destructive behaviour.

Wahida is national Vice-President of the Canadian Islamic Congress, and is a long-time political and social activist. She sits on several organizational committees whose focus includes the alleviation of child poverty and implementation of social reform

Even before the tragic events of 9/11, the Canadian Muslim community was under siege through negative media attention and was keenly aware that this has a cumulative negative effect on the psychological and emotional well being of its children. To respond to this complex and dangerous situation, the Canadian Islamic Congress in 1998 undertook its ongoing study project “Anti-Islam in the Media,” as part of its mandate to advocate on behalf of the Muslim community.

Since then, CIC has conducted annual media research to provide statistical data on occurrences of anti-Islam language to the senior management of national newspapers. As well, the CIC presents a powerful model of effective community mobilization in the search for a

more responsible and non-biased media." In addition to its media study work, the CIC has also been engaged in providing accurate information about Islam and Muslims to institutions, organizations, academics and the wider Muslim community itself. The Canadian Islamic Congress looks forward to working with the National Children's Alliance, especially with the First Nations communities, to serve the interest and the well being of all our children. Finally CIC would like to join you in research projects on mental health and wellness among the most vulnerable minority children in Canada. We must develop a comprehensive policy dealing with these issues because they impact on all children.

In closing, Wahida stated that the CIC would like to join the NCA in research projects on mental health and wellness among the most vulnerable minority children in Canada, and work together to develop a comprehensive policy dealing with these issues because they impact on all children.

You can't take children out of the family nor vice versa.

Nick Summers, Canadian Council for Refugees

Nick shared the ways and means that their organization 'stalked' the government. They meet constantly, have conferences every 6 months and workshops, work group meetings between conferences, and also have task forces. The organization constantly passes resolutions and makes policies for members to take forward.

They also do a lot of work internationally, partnering and networking with other countries. They also partner with labour unions, and of late they have thought about partnership with Aboriginal community as they see many similarities.

Nick Summers has been practicing law with the Newfoundland Legal Aid Commission since 1990, and specializing in Refugee and Immigration law. He was elected President of the Canadian Council for Refugees in 2003.

Rosemary McCarney, Executive Director, Street Kids International: 'A Lost Decade - Youth at Risk'

Rosemary presented the advocacy approach and strategy of Street Kids International.

The original goal was to put street kids issues on the agenda, but 16 years later the issue is still the same, so how can advocacy play a role?

You have to build influence but you need to be clear about what you want to influence. Identify the gaps and the fundamental issues and determine your advocacy entry points (i.e. community, regional/ provincial or federal, and the particular groups within those designations).

Rosemary is the Executive Director of Street Kids International. Before joining Street Kids International, she was Vice President, Global Research and Strategy for Nortel Networks and led their global workforce strategy group for their 12,000 employees worldwide.

Rosemary noted that one needs to build influence, and that this is achieved through constructing a strong empirical foundation of stories and anecdotes, qualitative and quantitative data, and case studies.

‘Worry as much about the health of your organization as about the issue/mission. If your organization is run well, no-one can undermine your work and initiatives’.

**Janis Douglas, Canadian Association for Community Living:
‘Lessons from Advocacy on behalf of children & youth with disabilities’**

Janis shared the CACL approach to advocacy. The highlights included:

1. Creating a profile for the issue to show how certain groups are vulnerable and excluded from societal benefits through building of alliances and coalitions
2. Doing Research: We need statistics and tell the story!
3. Developing a coherent policy agenda with key elements: overarching framework; inclusive lens; guiding principles; examination of current policies and practice, and demonstration of considerable effort to ameliorate the unacceptable gap in meeting the social development needs of populations of vulnerable children and their families.
4. Building and advancing an agenda with an inclusion lens; understanding that developing and implementing an inclusive children’s public policy agenda is not about improving policy for children with disabilities; it is about improving it for all children
5. Identify what the pieces are and move forward.
6. Linking of Children and Family Agenda’s, as a strong family support policy is one of the first steps in building a family enabling society and removing barriers to improving the well-being of all children in Canada
7. Building solidarity and a policy agenda that is driven at the Federal/Provincial and Territorial levels.

Janis Douglas is the National Coordinator of Family Initiatives for the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL). Prior to CACL, Janis was a community facilitator/planner for children with complex medical needs and their families.

Panel Questions and Comments

- 5% of children in care take 95% of resources therefore linkages are needed.
- The Rights of the Child is an entry point, but Street Kids speak about the un-fulfillment of the convention. The children we work with have no adults to protect their assertive and protective rights. The convention has only gone part way. It is however a good benchmark as it at least sets a standard and we use it as a tool.

Sandra Griffin thanked the panellists, and closed the session by reiterating the need for, and the power of partnerships, partnerships!

Video presentation

Path Exercise

“Working with Government to move the public policy agenda for children and youth” - The Outsider’s View

Objective: *To explore ways of working with Government to move the public policy agenda for children and youth*

Moderator: Peter Dudding

Robbin Tourangeau, Social Policy Advisor

Robin provided an overview and very useful of the public policy process: the general scene, the lead actors, members of the cast, the action, main events, writing your script, and other helpful hints. Robbin’s material is available on the NCA website.

She gave the participants the insiders’ view to help more strategically position organizations for policy development and federal government influence. She spoke of the need for patience, that government is messy and complex. It, like a big ship, can’t turn on a dime. Don’t lose heart and appreciate the importance of coalition building were two key messages. The NCA is a case study of what works.

Robbin has served as a policy advisor on social and urban issues to a variety of organizations and government departments. Her most recent experience was a four-year stint as a senior advisor in the Office of the Honourable Jean Chrétien.

Remain committed to a higher goal. To the members, put the bigger issues first and work together. Each and everyone are important to the policy process. Remember that your voice is part of a larger continuum, and the insiders need to be able to point to the chorus to back up rationale for change.

Gail Dugas, VP Canadian Council on Social Development

Gail’s presentation centred on the influence (and distractions) of the media and Members of Parliament in the public policy process.

How do we get Paul Martin to apply “come hell or high water” to children’s issues?

Gail is the Vice-President for Public Affairs at the Canadian Council for Social Development. She most recently worked as the Parliamentary Press Secretary for the Federal Caucus of the New Democratic Party on Parliament Hill.

Tips & Suggestions:

- ✓ She counselled that organizations must be prepared for distractions and the fact that there is nothing as slow as working a piece of agenda in the House. This is true,

particularly at this point due to the recent leadership campaign and an upcoming election. The legislative agenda is more like working around parliament and learning to bide your time.

- ✓ The new budget was disappointing for children's issues. As an exercise Gail did a Hansard search of the last session, and found that the sponsorship scandal consumed discussion in the House. Social issues came up only 80 times and it was around income adjustments. So there is lots of work to be done.
- ✓ Target conservative MP's as it is platform time, they don't have a platform right now, and they have an imaging problem. They don't have a children's representative in the party.
- ✓ On the CCCD website there are statistics and research that can be used to write letters to editors and MP's. They will use it because they are busy and they are looking for something to hang on to.
- ✓ Pick one issue, say it 101 times and be straightforward. Pick two questions for all levels of news outlets, i.e.: what is an acceptable level of children living in poverty, and what is the length of time for children to be living in poverty?
- ✓ Another challenge is that healthier children is related to other factors such as housing, and employment, and government is not interconnected, so as a result, while there is discussion about breaking jurisdictional barriers, more children stay in poverty.
- ✓ CCCD is undertaking a campaign at CCSD about Social Transfer funds. They are hoping to start a cross Canada dialogue soon.

PATH WORKSHOP

Path to:	Collective responsibility and public commitment that respects and supports children and families.
Path to:	Common public policy for all children.

CREATING A VISION / DREAM - THE NORTH STAR

VISUAL OFFERED	MEANING
Plates of food	Food banks gone
Hands together & green world	Aboriginal kids with families and lots of opportunities all together supporting aboriginal children, and gifts of aboriginal children coming together out of the circle
Chinese pagoda	Love
Dream catcher	Freedom to dream
Medicine wheel	Health of people (spiritual, emotional, mental and physical), and environment
Fireworks	Celebration
Swarming of bees	All going in same direction, respecting each other' space
Peace	Freedom to play
Fish & land	Preservation of resources
	Children now!

CREATING STRATEGIES

NOW (Making the Case)	ENROLL (Who to Influence)	STRONGER (Internal or external conditions that will strengthen our cause)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ 30 - 40% Aboriginal Children in care ♦ 1 million kids in poverty ♦ 45,000 kids will enter family violence shelters ♦ Too many children in emergency housing ♦ 40% of Aboriginal don't graduate from high school ♦ environment degrading ♦ many remain excluded ♦ people perceived as "Culture" not real! ♦ Bulk of leaders are focussed on debt & tax reduction ♦ Interest of security outweighs interest in social care ♦ No coherence in access, policy, standards, programs & services ♦ Reliance on private sector or church, etc to fill funding gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Federal cabinet / Political Leadership ♦ Business contacts ♦ Media ♦ Each other ♦ Aboriginal leadership ♦ Philanthropic organizations ♦ Ethno-cultural organizations ♦ Academic people and organizations ♦ Research community ♦ Elders ♦ Educators ♦ Community groups & local leaders ♦ Public health officials ♦ Religious groups ♦ Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ INAC part of dialogue on children's issues ♦ Co-ordinated advocacy strategy of NCA and resources available ♦ Focused, well-researched proposals to increase capacity & credibility ♦ A 6-month report card to keep our momentum and to go back to membership ♦ Networking to maintain momentum ♦ Relationships with government officials ♦ Tools (technology) ♦ Links to local level ♦ More youth participation ♦ Positive reinforcement of accomplishments

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THE POSSIBLE AND POSITIVE

1. Ten (10) NCA First Step Awards are awarded at the community level & 10 Second Step Awards are awarded to recipients at the next Symposium in 2005.
2. Indian Affairs provides an increase of 22% in Family Support.
3. There are harmonious relations in the US regarding the war and the missile defense activities have been cancelled.
4. All political parties have children and youth in their election platforms and 2005 budget reflects inclusive policies for children and youth.
5. The National Action Plan for children has goals and outcomes established.
6. The NCA has provincial and territorial alliances participating.
7. The minimum wage is \$9.00 an hour.
8. There is a shift in funding from contributions to grants to support NGO's (sustained capacity funding).
9. The CSTF is strong, has funding and permanent monitoring
10. The rate of poverty is reduced 10%.
11. More children are happier.
12. There is an increase in prevention and harm reduction programs across Canada.
13. Bill C - 25 is now on the agenda and government has started a consultation on youth strategies.
14. The United Nations has recognized the problem and followed up, making Canada a leader in human rights issues of children.
15. The private and corporate sector are engaged
16. There are more youth are participating in the NCA.
17. There are more Aboriginal MP's.
18. More maternity and & paternity benefits are announced.
19. There is increased northern access to services has been committed to included baby's born in their own community.

ACTION STEPS

- ♦ Election strategy and tool kit for grass roots children's issues
- ♦ Skills inventory - the who will deliver the advocacy
- ♦ Media strategy with key messages
- ♦ 6 month report back to membership
- ♦ Identify people in provinces and territories to be involved
- ♦ Conduct 2 regional meetings and have NCA members invited (Cindy's training session)
- ♦ Members to provide information to build possible and positive ideas
- ♦ Develop a position (NCA in National Action Plan and CST and communicate this
- ♦ Expand NCA Aboriginal working group and youth
- ♦ NCA hold workshop of CST to develop an advocacy action plan
- ♦ Report on monitoring progress

FIRST STEPS

1. Share all presentations and the proceedings
2. Summarize proceedings into the next NCA newsletter
3. Develop NCA campaign platform
4. Identify core competencies of members, make a list of tasks that need to be done, and ask members to volunteer
5. Inventory members' individual / personal contacts for purposes of taking advantage of the upcoming federal election
6. Develop fact sheets
7. Everyone to sign the petition and move it forward in their respective organizations and networks
8. Continually promote the value of the NCA and its members

RELATIONSHIPS ARE US!

Closing Remarks

Wrap-up of Day 1: Joan Glode

‘We are in a different frame of mind as a result of the training day. Thanks to the organizing committee for bringing such incredible people together to participate and present to the symposium. It was great to have Bill Gillespie, our Elder and the youth here participating. We have enjoyed a very inclusive dialogue through which we all have learned’.

Wrap-up of Day 2: Janet Davies

‘The public policy presentation reminded us that there are people who need to be influenced, and that we want to be clear about what we want to influence. The Path workshop helped us to describe why we are here, what we are up to, and where we want to go as an Alliance. Using our wonderful location as an analogy, the mountains, are huge and awesome as it relates to scope and impact of the dialogue on everyone here. Advocacy for policy change is the reason the Alliance came together. Based on the information gathered and lessons learned from the panels and dialogue of the past two days, it is now time to identify the next steps for the Alliance in taking the children’s agenda forward’.

How far we have come from 8 years ago!

In closing Harvey Weiner emphasized the need for relationships, as they are the key to sustainable development and working with government. Effective advocacy and influence is more than meetings and briefs. It is developing policy alternatives and solutions in collaboration with government at all three levels with the membership. Passion is a key component of effective advocacy.

ELDER’S PRAYER

“Thank the Creator for this productive and happy day and for our safe return to our homes.