

National Children's Alliance (NCA)

E-mail Digest, week of 8-12 December, 2003

NCA ACTIVITIES:

1. **Notice:** Forum on Public Policy and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 29-30 January 2004, Ottawa
2. **Announcement:** NCA National Symposium, Kananaskis, Alberta, 24-26 March 2004
3. **Reminder:** Upcoming Meetings of the NCA

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS:

1. **Celebration:** NCA members mark National Child Day
2. **Information:** CTF releases new study on kids and the media
3. **Follow-up:** new partnerships follow NCA Aboriginal workshop
4. **Announcement:** Educational Tour to Cuba
5. **Job posting:** FRP Canada Seeking Executive Director

ISSUE ALERT: new feature in E-mail Digest – feedback welcome!

NCA ACTIVITIES:

1. **The Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia National Children's Alliance and the Canadian Coalition on the Rights of the Child (CCRC)**, in cooperation with the **National Children's Alliance**, are organizing a forum to examine current policies towards children using the rights-based framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). There will be an opportunity to consider responses to the National Plan of Action for children that has been completed by Senator Landon Pearson and that will be submitted to the new federal Cabinet. The meeting will bring forward evidence-based research demonstrating how the Convention has shaped public policy in this country, especially with respect to child participation; it will identify case law in Canadian courts citing the Convention; and it will look at Canada's reporting record on the CRC, as well as the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on Canada's report. This event will take place in Ottawa, at a location to be confirmed, on the 29th and 30th of January 2004. For information, please contact the CCRC at (613) 729-5289.

2. **The NCA Annual National Symposium** has been fixed for the 24, 25 and 26th of March next year at the Kananaskis Resort Hotel in Alberta. The theme of the Symposium will be Advocacy, with two main streams of discussion: 1) Aboriginal children and 2) Monitoring of public commitments to children. The Symposium will start with an opening session on the evening of Wednesday 24 March, followed by workshops and activities on Thursday the 25th and continuing on Friday the 26th until 2:00pm. In addition, there will be a special one-day session on the 24th on the topic of "Caring Across the Boundaries: Creating Collaborative Relationships between the Philanthropic Organizations and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada". This pilot course is being offered to member organizations of the NCA before it is taken and tested out across the country; national members can then inform their community partners when the course comes to their region. Space in the course is limited to 30 participants and one representative per member organization; seats will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Certificates of completion will be awarded to participating organizations at the end of the training. Registration information for the whole Symposium will be sent out before the Christmas holidays. Reserve these dates on your calendars!

3. **Next meetings:**

- Steering Committee: 11 December 2pm (by teleconference); 15 January; 19 February.
- Members: 8 January (Ottawa); 11 February (Toronto).

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS:

1. **Children were honoured** around the world and all across Canada last Thursday, in celebration of the day that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations in 1989. In Canada, the 20th of November was designated as National Children's Day by the Child Day Act (1993, c. 18), to promote awareness in Canada of the Convention.

Today, the CRC is the most widely ratified treaty in history. UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy called on governments to renew their commitments to ensuring that every child's full rights are protected and fulfilled. "Although the world has made tremendous progress since 1989 to see that children's rights are universally accepted and realized, we are not there yet," said Bellamy. "Children are still forced to serve as soldiers, children orphaned by AIDS are abandoned by society, millions of children die from preventable diseases -- as do their mothers. The rights of these marginalized and forgotten children need to be our highest priority if we really want to achieve the social and economic goals we've set."

The Millennium Goals were agreed upon by the international community in 2000 and include the aim of eradicating extreme poverty and eliminating hunger by the year 2015; to meet those promises, UNICEF says, children now being born must get what previous generations of marginalized children have not gotten: a healthy start in life; a quality basic education; and a safe and loving environment in which to thrive.

In Canada, National Child's Day is a day to take stock of the commitments this country has made to children. Our members called upon the Government to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children in this country, especially Aboriginal and poor children, and to address the root causes of their problems: poverty, discrimination and lack of services. **Save the Children Canada, Campaign 2000, the Canadian Coalition on the Rights of Children** and the **Canadian Child Care Federation** pressed the newly elected provincial governments and the new leadership at the federal level to collaboratively fulfil the promises made in the National Plan of Action (NPA) and to deliver real and lasting change for children. While Canada has been a leader in promoting child rights internationally, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recently criticized this country for failing to ensure equal and consistent application of the Convention for all children in this nation. The groups hope that these concerns will be resolved in the National Plan of Action, although its anticipated completion has been delayed due to the political changes in Ottawa.

2. The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) conducted a national survey of children's perception of the media. *Kids' Take on the Media* questioned over 5000 elementary and secondary school children across the country about their viewing habits and how violence in the media influences them. The results of the study revealed facts about this country's children that gave cause for concern, but others that were reassuring and somewhat predictable as Canadians:

- those children who receive no parental guidance as to what they can watch on TV (which were about half of the total population surveyed) tended to rate media violence as less harmful.
- another key finding was that violent content did not increase the appeal of a program to young viewers; rather kids look for shows that contain excitement and humour.
- a significant number of children pay attention to news of what is happening in other parts of the world, and those who are more concerned about world events are more likely to act upon those concerns.
- access to media is widespread among the children surveyed: almost half of kids aged 8-15 have their own TV and over one third have their own VCR.

The CTF says that although there are many resources available to help kids think critically about what they see on TV and on the Internet, teachers are not getting enough training to teach media literacy in schools.

Another Alliance member, the **Family Service of Canada**, was on the Advisory Committee to the CTF for this study.

A summary of the findings of *Kids' Take on Media* is available at <www.ctf-fce.ca> and <www.erinresearch.com>.

4. Partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Alliance member organizations have emerged following the NCA Workshop "Towards Working Together for Aboriginal Children in Canada", held on 29th October. The **Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada** and the **Canadian Association of Family Resource Programmes** have both approached the **First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (FNCFCFS)** about partnering on various initiatives, including expanding their outreach to Aboriginal communities. Also, a Board member of the FNCFCFS who runs a Head Start program in a First Nations community has connected with the **Canadian Child Care Federation**. If any other NCA member organization has collaborated with an Aboriginal group or community as a result of the Workshop, please tell us about it, and we will include your success story in the E-mail digest.

5. The Child Welfare League of Canada is hosting its fourth Children's Service Leadership Institute in Cuba, from 31 January to 7 February, 2004. Participants will see how this country of limited resources is maintaining a strong and growing commitment to social and health services and programs for women, children and communities. Activities will include meeting with Government officials, visits to children's clinics, daycares and schools, a trip to a rural pediatric facility and, of course, taking in the historic and cultural sights of Havana. The cost of the tour will be an all-inclusive \$2150 CDN plus \$140.70 in taxes. Participation in this study tour is limited to 15-20 individuals interested children's services leaders. For more information, please contact Michael Kerman at 1-888-291-1133 or mkerman@rogers.com, or Nanci Morrison at (613) 235-4412 ext 23 or nanci@cwlc.ca.

5. The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada) is seeking an Executive Director with the combination of skills and commitment that is required to ensure that the association achieves its vision for the future. The successful candidate must have experience working at the national level with many partners, including government. He or she must have sound knowledge of policy and programs in the family support field. Excellent written

and oral communications skills are essential. Proficiency in both official languages is an asset.

Requirements:

- Post-secondary degree in a related field
- A sound understanding of governance in the not-for-profit sector
- Experience in: administration and financial management; budget development; staff supervision; proposal writing; project management; fund raising; public relations

Salary: Commensurate with experience.

Please submit application with names of three referees to: Human Resources, FRP Canada, 707 – 331 Cooper St., Ottawa, ON K2P 0G5. Fax: (613) 237-8515. E-mail: info@frp.ca

Deadline: Midnight EST Dec. 21, 2003

ISSUE ALERT:

Keeping our finger on the pulse of children's issues: Issue Alert is a new feature of the E-mail digest, which will highlight current and emerging issues and events, in Canada and around the world, that can impact on the work of our members and/or the NCA as a whole. Let us know what you think of this section of the Digest and you are welcome to send us any issues you think would be relevant for our membership. The only criteria are: 1) that the event/issue/news item be national in scope and 2) that it have implications for child policy in Canada. This week:

1. **The First Nation and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) of Health Canada is planning to cut funding** for Aboriginal Headstart programs on-reserve by \$2.7 million dollars, in order to reduce its deficit in the Manitoba region. Following a reduction last year of \$1 million dollars, these cutbacks stand in sharp contrast to the \$3.5 million dollars the program was supposed to receive as part of the federal government's Early Childhood Development Initiative. Currently, there are 20 Headstart programs on Manitoba reserves, each costing about of \$170 thousand to run. There are 21 proposals for new programs and 11 of those are slated for possible approval, but with no funding at this point. These projects were hoping to benefit from the 3.5 million-dollar increase; however, with the additional cuts to funding, the future of these projects remains at risk.

2. A new approach to refugee selection is being implemented in Canada. The Hon. Denis Coderre, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), announced the arrival of the first group of refugees selected to come to Canada through *group processing*. **Two groups of refugees -- 30 Sudanese and 17 Somalis – arrived in Canada on 4 November** from the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. Group processing is an innovative approach to identifying refugees abroad and bringing them to Canada. Under this approach, Canada and the UNHCR identify entire refugee populations, as opposed to individuals, and resettle these populations in the same community. Both the Sudanese and Somali refugees, destined for **Winnipeg and Hamilton** respectively, were deemed vulnerable by CIC because they had been experiencing persecution in the camp for many years. **In the next six to eight months, approximately 900 refugees will arrive in Winnipeg, Hamilton and Edmonton.** The refugees are being admitted under Canada's Refugee Resettlement and Humanitarian Program, which provides support for refugees through local settlement agencies. The agencies help the refugees find housing, language training and other social services. Funding for these organizations comes from the federal and provincial governments.
-
-

You are receiving this e-mail as a member of the National Children's Alliance General Distribution List. If you wish to be removed from this list, please reply to this e-mail with the subject "Remove." Please send any comments or feedback to tashtakala@nvo-onb.ca