

National Children's Alliance (NCA)

E-mail Digest, week of 10-14 May, 2004

NCA ACTIVITIES:

1. **Meetings:** **Steering Committee of the NCA, 13 May 2004, 9-10am**
Members' meeting and Advocacy Workshop, 13 May 2004, 10am-12:30pm, Ottawa
Members' meeting and Advocacy Workshop, 18 May 2004,
3. **Input:** **statistics for advocacy requested from our members**
4. **Feedback** **invited on Youth Issues paper**
5. **Reminder** **please note new coordinates of NCA**

NEWS FOR OUR MEMBERS:

1. **Announcement** **Fifth Annual Lowery Lecture on Children's Rights**
- 2.

ISSUE ALERT:

1. **Prime Minister holds Summit on Aboriginal issues**
2. **Private health care entering First Nations reserves?**

NCA ACTIVITIES:

1. **The National Children's Alliance is growing!** Five new organizations of both international and national renown have joined the NCA, adding their voices to our collective advocacy on behalf of children and youth. The Alliance is pleased to welcome:
 - **The Students' Commission** has created a proactive forum for youth to direct public policy. National Reports are presented to the Prime Minister, the Governor General, cabinet ministers, provincial premiers and business, education, community and labour leaders across Canada.
 - **Canadian Movement for Literacy's** mission is to be a national voice for literacy for every Canadian through networking, research, government liaison, learner development, communication, collaboration and building the capacity to support the people and organizations involved with adult literacy education.

- **National Association of Friendship Centres** seeks to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to, and participation in, Canadian Society; and which respect and strengthen the increasing emphasis on Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness.
- **Street Kids International** is an organization based in Canada that works internationally to raise awareness about the needs and rights of street youth, provide training and capacity building opportunities that introduce youth-centred methods for working with street youth, develop a global network of organizations and front-line workers striving to support local street youth, co-develop with this global network the best-practices and materials for meeting the needs of street youth.
- **Defence for Children International – Canada (DCI)** is an independent international non-governmental organization, with headquarters in Geneva, that was set up during the International Year of the Child (1979) to ensure on-going, practical, systematic and concerted international action specially directed towards promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

We look forward to working with each of these unique organizations on the common challenges we all face in fighting to improve the lives of young people.

2. The next meeting of Ottawa-area members of the National Children's Alliance will take place on Thursday 13 May from 10am to 12:30pm in the boardroom of the Canadian Council on Social Development, 309 Cooper Street, Ottawa. To continue the momentum of our recent conference in Kananaskis, this meeting will focus on NCA advocacy in four areas:

1. Election platform
2. Dialogue on advocacy relating to the new Canada Social Transfer
3. Follow-up to the National Plan of Action
4. NCA Strategic Plan for 2004-05

3. The NCA will be putting together an election kit; it will be enhanced with the latest statistics on the state of Canada's children in order to make the strongest possible case as to why Canada's kids should be doing better. We are therefore inviting members to submit any new data or statistics they might have that can bolster our election platform in areas like child poverty, health of aboriginal children, inactivity and obesity, early childhood development, numbers of

children using foodbanks, monitoring and accountability, housing, youth challenges, disability, etc.

4. The first draft of a paper on Youth Issues commissioned by the NCA is now being circulated to members for their feedback. It is hoped this document will form the basis of a national youth strategy that the Working Group on Youth issues is trying to develop. Please find the paper attached below. If you would like to join the Working Group, please e-mail tara@nationalchildrensalliance.com.

5. The NCA is now located at a new address: Please note our new contact information: 331 Cooper St, Suite 707, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 0G5, tel: (613) 560-5843, fax: (613) 237-8515, website: www.nationalchildrensalliance.com, E-mail: tara@nationalchildrensalliance.com or <mailto:dianne@nationalchildrensalliance.com>.

NEWS FOR OUR MEMBERS:

1. Call for papers: Childhoods 2005 Conference, 29 June – 5 July, 2005, Oslo, Norway. The network on Social Indicators of Children's Well-Being in Emerging and Transforming Societies will be holding an international conference on children and youth in these communities. Organizers are inviting the submission of research on sets or systems of indicators related to children's well being in specific local, national or multi-national contexts, on empirical analysis and production of data and on the use of data to affect public policy. The focus will be on indicators of well-being for categories/groups of children at multinational, national, regional or community levels, on theoretical approaches to the identification and use of child well-being indicators, as well as on case studies and comparative research. Papers will be presented as workshops, panels and posters. The deadline for submitting abstracts is 20 October 2004. Please see <http://childhoods2005.uio.no> for more information.

2. Family Service Canada will be holding their 2004 national conference from 21 to 23 October in Sydney, Nova Scotia. Proposals are being sought for workshop topics reflecting the overall theme of the conference, "Fostering Peace in Individuals, Families and Communities...Imagine!!!". To see guidelines for structuring workshop content and for more information on the conference, please see www.familyservicecanada.org under the "What's new" section.

2. Save the Children International is carrying out research on NGO participation in the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It is

interested in collecting information from NGOs that have carried out monitoring and reporting activities that have contributed to improved data collection on children; enhanced the dialogue and interaction between Government and NGOs on the process, contents and quality of the official country report; and strengthened the accountability of State Parties as the main duty bearers in relation to the implementation of the Convention. Please forward information to nh@redbarnet.dk.

3. The Canadian Association for Community Living has been on the Canadian government delegation to the Children's Congresses since 1994. The involvement of CACL in these policy meetings has meant a shift from a focus on just the provision of health services to a framework of human rights and inclusion. The goal of the Congress is to allow for multi-disciplinary teams from around the world to exchange information about ways to develop national policies and how to establish local systems of health, education and social services for children with disabilities in their home communities. The Congress will also serve as the foundation for developing an international network that will foster an ongoing dialogue among nations about philosophies, policies, legislation, funding and practices used to help children with disabilities maximize their potential. The theme of this year's conference is "Towards Full Citizenship" and it will focus on what has to be done to reach the goal of full citizenship for disabled young people in different parts of the world. For more information on the Congress, please see www.statped.no/congress2004. To enquire about being part of the Canadian delegation, please contact Zuhy Sayeed at zsayeed@cacl.ca.

5. A new guide on "Monitoring government budgets to advance child rights: a guide for NGOs" has been compiled by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa. The guide aims to assist people who would like to conduct their own research on government's budgeting for children. The handbook offers research support and practical guidance on how to use the child budget analysis to generate information that can be used to advance child rights. For more information, contact: Christina@idasact.org.za or see www.idasa.org.za/bis/cbu.

6. A new report by Ontario's Chief Advocate Judy Finlay addresses why we must understand and confront peer-on-peer violence operating within the youth custodial system, following on the recent Inquest into the death of a young man in custody in the province. This article can be found in the e-bulletin of Voices for Children, at www.voicesforchildren.ca/report-Apr2004-1.htm.

7. Save the Children UK has published a report on children and young people's involvement in the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. For more information, please e-mail r.Marcus@savethechildren.org.uk.

ISSUE ALERT:

1. Aboriginal leaders from across the country held a one-day summit on 18 April with Prime Minister Paul Martin. The topics discussed included health care, housing and education to economic opportunities for native people on and off reserves, proposals to restructure the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and a reporting system so native leaders can update Parliament on progress made in tackling various problems. Aboriginal leaders said the issues of poverty, crime, substance abuse and suicide are too important to be ignored forever, and they can't afford to give up hope that the federal government is serious about change. Critics have said Monday's gathering did not once address the problems specific to the segments of the Aboriginal population that are children and youth, elderly and disabled, and said it was nothing more than a well-orchestrated photo opportunity for the prime minister in an election-charged environment.

2. Private health care firms eyeing First Nations communities: The Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan says it plans to build a private, for-profit MRI in an aboriginal-run medical facility in Saskatoon. When it is finished the brand new medical centre will house doctors, physiotherapists and dietitians - as well as the first on-reserve, for-profit MRI in Canada.

Lester Lafond is the band member who is behind the project. "We have the right," he says, "... the right in this country to open this type of facility. It is our land. We are here first and foremost to put projects on our land to try to generate revenue."

The idea started with Ottawa's devolution of responsibility for health to First Nations. It quickly became a business opportunity for the Muskeg Lake Cree. Ottawa is paying for a feasibility study and private firms, including US-based ones, are lining up to invest.

Saskatchewan's Health Minister John Nilson is dead set against the plan which he says "breaches the Canada Health Act." Nilson says those who charge more than medicare covers break the law and create problems for the public system. "These private MRIs take away staff from the public MRIs and we have some challenges getting staff already in Saskatchewan and we don't want to compound that by having another MRI."

While Muskeg Lake is the only band formally proposing a private MRI now, it says other First Nations across Saskatchewan and across Canada could follow suit.

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