



FIRST NATIONS CHILD & FAMILY CARING SOCIETY OF CANADA



Summer 2011

OUR DREAMS MATTER TOO: First Nations Students Ask the United Nations to investigate inequitable Education on Reserves

On the week of the third anniversary for the apology for residential schools, First Nations students joined with non-Aboriginal students and adult allies at Pierre Elliott Trudeau School in Gatineau Quebec to release a report on First Nations education called *Our Dreams Matter Too*. The report requests the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to study the inequities in First Nations elementary and secondary education.

The report was inspired by First Nations youth education activist Shannen Koostachin, founder of the Shannen's Dream campaign for safe and comfy schools and equitable education, and convened by a group of students from Attawapiskat First Nation and Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation called the "Dream Team." The report, supported by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, includes letters from First Nations students across Canada on how the under-funding of schools and education on reserve impacts them and their futures. Many of the letters echo this statement by Chelsea

Edwards, youth spokesperson for the Shannen's Dream campaign, "Just like Rosa Parks as she started the civil rights movement, we have been sitting at the back of the school bus our entire lives. It was Shannen



who rose and walked to the front of the bus, with the company of many children. The back was not a place where we wanted to be, where NO ONE should be."

Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society says "This is the third anniversary of Prime Minister Harper's apology for residential schools and yet First Nations education and child welfare continue to be dramatically under-funded. Many First Nations have no schools or have schools in deplorable condition. The Auditor General has repeatedly called for equity in education and child welfare but Canada's

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TOUCHSTONES OF HOPE: Moving toward Reconciliation in Indigenous Child Welfare

Andrea Auger



This past winter and spring, the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society collaborated with the Regional Aboriginal Youth Engagement Coordinator at the Ministry of Children and Family Development in Kamloops. The initiative involved the Voices of Experience [VOE] panel which is composed of approximately 10-15 youth who have been or who are currently in child welfare care. The first session occurred in February of 2011 at the Quaaout Lodge outside of Kamloops. The youth learned about the Touchstones and created their dream for the VOE panel using PATH. In April 2011, the panel and their mentors reassembled at the Quaaout Lodge for a Touchstones train the trainer session. The group learned more about the Touchstones

of Hope through our 7 Ways to Make a Difference. The youth also learned more about the history of Aboriginal Peoples, residential schools, child welfare and reconciliation through the stories of Elders and mentors at the session. On the last day, there were small group presentations in order to practice presentation skills. In June, members of the VOE panel assisted in facilitating small group discussion at a Touchstones regional session in Kamloops.

The Caring Society has been working as part of a collaboration of First Nations communities, First Nations child and family service agencies and Ministry of Children and Family Development [MCFD] in northern BC on a broad based movement to implement the Touchstones of Hope principles into policies and practices (www.northernbctouchstones.ca). As a result, the movement has spread to the interior of British Columbia. From June 14 to 15, 2011, 240 leaders in the Kamloops region gathered to introduce or enhance knowledge of the Touchstones guiding principles - Culture & Language, Holistic Approach, Non Discrimination, Structural Interventions and Self Determination. Through a reconciliation process beginning with truth telling, leaders were able to create their visions for healthy Aboriginal children. Speakers included Elders, individuals from the Stsmémelt Project, community members, staff from MCFD, and others who have been engaged in the northern BC Touchstones. In addition, the leaders watched presentations on reconciliation and the Touchstones of Hope through videos done by the Caring Society.

These videos were created by the Caring Society and filmmakers Andree Cazabon and Jith Paul. Featuring Cindy Blackstock, these four, 5-7 minute videos, include:

- Why Reconciliation is needed in Child Welfare?
- Designing Child Welfare from the Ground Up: Introduction to the Touchstones of Hope Movement
- 7 Free Ways You Can Make a Difference
- Children and Youth Helping Aboriginal Families

We invite you to learn more about reconciliation in child welfare by watching and sharing the videos with others. To watch these and other videos by the Caring Society, find [fncaringsociety](http://fncaringsociety.com) on YouTube! The reconciliation videos are also on our Touchstones page at www.fncaringsociety.com.



Why Reconciliation is needed in Child Welfare?



Designing Child Welfare from the Group Up:



7 Free Ways You Can Make a Difference



Children and Youth Helping Aboriginal Families

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response is piecemeal and inadequate.”

Dream Team members say this to the United Nations: “As children and youth, we continue to write letters to the Government but nothing changes. The discrimination and denial of our rights continues. We need your help. Please read our letters. Please come

to see us!”

For more information see www.shannensdream.ca or contact: Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada 613 230 5885 or 613 793 8440 or cblackst@fncaringsociety.com

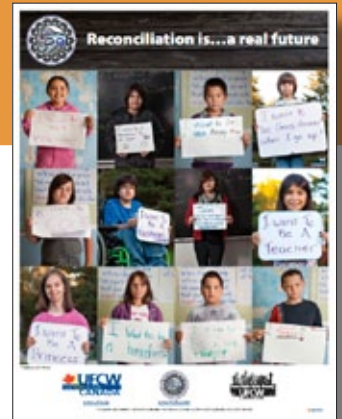


Nominate **SOMEONE**

Advocating for systemic changes to improve the safety, health or well-being of Inuit, Metis and First Nations children and youth!

MORE INFORMATION about the Peter Henderson Bryce, M.D. Award for Excellence in Public Health Advocacy for First Nations, Metis and Inuit children and youth can be found at <http://www.fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/events/BryceAward2011.pdf>.

Using the photos taken by Liam Sharp, five (5) posters (in both English and French) were created in partnership with UFCW Canada to mark National Aboriginal Day on June 21st. To view these posters online visit http://ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_multicategories&view=article&id=2392%3Aanational-aboriginal-day-june-21-posters-published&Itemid=98&lang=en



THANK YOU to UFCW Canada for these fabulous posters!

Save the Date

For the upcoming fundraising event in support of the

FIRST NATIONS

Child & Family Caring Society of Canada

Plan to attend the

MB First Nations Child Welfare

GALA

4th Annual

Thursday, October 27th, 2011
VICTORIA INN, Winnipeg, MB

For more information contact Pat Cameron at 204.766-2655 (patc@secfs.org) and/or Melissa Meawasige at 204.947-0011 (melissam@secfs.org)



FNCFCFS membership information

If you would like to join the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society as a Member under one of the following categories:

- Individual Membership (\$75)
- Student Membership with ID (\$5)
- Elder Membership (\$5)
- Small FNCFS Agency Membership:
1 - 50 employees (\$350)
- Large FNCFS Agency Membership:
50+ employees (\$600)
- Small Associate Membership:
Organizations with 1 - 50 employees (\$350)
- Large Associate Membership:
Organizations with 50+ employees (\$600)

Please contact us:

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New and Revised Resources



Sheila Fraser may have departed from her role as the Auditor General but she didn't leave without advocating for more fundamental changes by government to address the inequalities faced by Aboriginal peoples and their children and youth.

Tabled by interim AG John Wiersem, the report reveals the basic quality of life for First Nations communities is deteriorating—education, child welfare, drinking water and housing are

deemed “dramatically substandard,” and reveal a significant disparity. Fraser stated that she was “profoundly disappointed to note... that despite federal action in response to our recommendations over the years, a disproportionate number of First Nations people still lack the most basic services that other Canadians take for granted.” The auditor general’s office examined 16 audits over the last 10 years to see if any improvements had been made or previous commitments met, and found that little had been done to implement changes. Fraser identified a lack of legislation defining what services the government is responsible for as the chief culprit. As a result, First Nations communities are uncertain about receiving federal funding and lack the proper administrative bodies for educational and health.

The full report can be obtained from http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201106_04_e_35372.html.

Check out the website of one of our heroes **WESLEY PRANKARD** who is working hard to make a difference for First Nations children who don't have access to playgrounds in their communities ...

<http://northernstarfish.org>

FOLLOW US ON THE WEB!

