World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education, Hamilton New Zealand

Cindy Blackstock was honoured to present a keynote address at this prestigious conference hosted by the Maori peoples in November of 2005. This international event brought together over 3000 delegates from around the world to share knowledge on Indigenous knowledge, research, leadership and transformation. Workshops on hundreds of topics supplemented the diverse range of keynote and inspirational speakers. For information on how to access a copy of the conference proceedings and International Indigenous Journal please visit www.wipce2005.com.

FNCFCS expresses sincere appreciation to the WIPCE organizers for their grace as hosts and for providing such a rich learning opportunity.

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an Update on Jordan's Principle

On March 13, 2006, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society was honoured to send copies of the Joint Declaration on Jordan's Principle to all provincial/territorial and federal governments calling on them to immediately adopt this cost neutral child first principle to inter-governmental jurisdictional disputes. As of March 7, 2006, over 120 individuals joined with 17 national and regional organizations to support the Joint Declaration. We thank those who joined hands with us to show cross country support for Jordan's Principle.

The list of supporters continues to grow every day demonstrating the public’s commitment to ensuring that needs of children come before the needs of government. If you would like to express your personal or organizational support for Jordan’s Principle, please sign up at www.fnfcfs.com and watch your e-mail for an invitation to number of Jordan’s Principle supporters in your networks and communities. We are also honored to note that Amnesty International Canada has included the issue of inequitable child welfare funding for Indigenous children in it’s annual Write for Rights campaign. This effort has resulted in over 1500 letters being sent to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development encouraging them to provide the funding necessary to ensure that First Nations children have an equitable chance to remain safely at home. For more information on the Amnesty International letter writing campaign or to get information on how you can add your voice to the growing list of supporters, please visit http://www.amnesty.ca/writeathon/lettercases.php

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada voices our sincere appreciation to Amnesty International Canada for making this important contribution to the support Indigenous child rights.
The Time is Now: A Declaration for Aboriginal children

Victoria, B.C.—They came from every corner of Canada—from urban centers and remote communities, from grassroots organizations and national offices, from the voluntary sector and governments. But the diverse group of more than 160 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health professionals, social workers, educators, parents, administrators, policy makers, researchers and community leaders who came together in December agreed on one important thing: First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth in Canada need adults to act now.

The first-ever event of its kind, Many Hands, One Dream: New perspectives on the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth held in Victoria in December of 2005, is the beginning of a long-term effort to create fundamental and sustained improvements in the health of Aboriginal kids in Canada.

“Today we gather to create a movement of people who are prepared to make change,” said Dr. Kent Saylor, chair of the Canadian Paediatric Society’s First Nations and Inuit Health Committee and the event’s master of ceremonies. “You are all here as the many hands that have been sent to play a role.”

The three-day event began with an inspiring keynote address from Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada. She spoke about the difficulties facing Aboriginal children and youth in their homes and communities, and the need for health and social services professionals to change their approach to caring for these children.

She pointed out, for instance, that as many as one in 10 status Indian children are in the care of child welfare, compared with one in 200 non-Aboriginal children. Yet while Aboriginal children are less likely to be reported to child welfare authorities for physical or sexual abuse, they are twice as likely to experience neglect.

“The key drivers of neglect experienced by Aboriginal children are poverty, poor housing and substance abuse…two of which parents have very little control over,” she said. “If the basics aren’t there, is there any wonder there are problems?”

The summit focused on some of these fundamental questions. Over two days, breakout session and panel discussions centered on several key themes, including healthy families and communities, inequity in health and health care for Aboriginal children and youth, and the impact of social and political exclusion on meaningful participation by Aboriginal organizations. Presenters reflected both on their personal and professional experiences with Aboriginal children. They discussed the importance of community, traditional values and teachings and how they help to raise a child and how to move decisively toward a common goal.

Participants were challenged to define concrete actions that they could do when they returned home to their organizations and communities, and were asked to express their commitment in a collective declaration:

“We will raise a generation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth who do not have to recover from their childhoods. It starts now, with all our strength, courage, wisdom and commitment.”

Each of the planning committee organizations—including the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada)—agreed to take steps to formally adopt the declaration, seen as a symbolic but critical act in changing the status quo for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth.

On virtually every measure of health status—including rates of infant mortality, suicide, obesity and diabetes—there is a significant gap between Aboriginal children and youth and other Canadian kids. And while many conferences and reports have sought solutions to specific clinical issues, the Many Hands summit took a broader view at the causes of poor health and the potential for lasting change.

The result of several years of planning and discussion, Many Hands, One Dream was hosted by 11 organizations: Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, Assembly of First Nations, Canadian Paediatric Society, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Health Canada (First Nations and Inuit Health Branch), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, National Aboriginal Health Organization, National Association of Friendship Centres, National Indian and Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.

The November issue of Paediatrics & Child Health, with guest editors Dr. Kent Saylor and Cindy Blackstock, features articles related to the summit’s themes and key areas of discussion. Follow-up activities, to be determined by the planning committee early in the new year, are expected to continue throughout the year.

For more information visit www.manyhandsonedream.ca
Making a Difference - First Nations Youth and the Voluntary Sector

Bringing together First Nations youth and the voluntary sector is a natural transition for the Caring Across the Boundaries program. Indeed, the impetus for the project derived from the passion of 2 women at a Caring Across the Boundaries session who recognized the potential of this program to engage First Nations youth and youth oriented voluntary sector organizations together. Addressing the paucity of First Nations youth involvement in youth oriented voluntary sector organizations builds on the foundation of the research, the program and the experiences of program participants to date.

In the 2003 study, Caring Across the Boundaries: Promoting Access to Voluntary Sector Resources (Blackstock & Nadjiwan), on the relationship between the voluntary sector and First Nations agencies it was brought to light that:

- 100% of voluntary sector organizations surveyed served children, youth and families
- None of the organizations surveyed knew what the needs of First Nations children, youth and families on reserve were in detail

Furthermore, the barriers to collaboration included lack of time to network and build relationships. A key contributing factor in building relationships is initiating contact, however, this can be daunting when distance, lack of cultural knowledge and a lack of understanding about each other’s needs create what appears to be insurmountable hurdles. However, the research also indicated that despite these barriers, a strong desire to work together was present. Moreover, as participants travel through the Caring Across the Boundaries process it is common that the barriers dissipate and are replaced with enthusiasm for collaboration with the hurdles no longer seem to exist.

The Caring Across the Boundaries: Youth Focus program addresses these barriers to collaboration by focusing on how youth serving voluntary sector agencies can make space within their organizations for the participation of First Nations Youth. First Nations Youth are also introduced to a variety of organizations that they can become engaged in to develop their skills and enhance the supports that are available within their communities. Ultimately, it is about exploring options and developing strengths in new areas.

This workshop is an opportunity for First Nations Youth to:

- Learn more about volunteering
- Learn more about the services available in the community and surrounding areas
- Learn how to organize and facilitate a workshop
- Build personal and professional capacity and employability

This workshop is an opportunity for Youth Serving Voluntary Sector organizations to:

- Learn more about the experiences of First Nations youth on reserve
- Learn how to work respectfully with First Nations youth on reserve
- Develop capacity to engage First Nations youth in your organization and programs

Workshop Outline

- ½ day Primer for Youth Serving Voluntary Sector Organizations
- ½ day Primer for First Nations Youth on the Voluntary Sector
- 1 day Collaboration Day

Organizational Support

A full time coordinator for the Caring Across the Boundaries: Youth Focus has been hired. Ms. Jordan Ann Alderman brings to this position extensive experience in organizing and facilitating workshops and a history of working with young people. She has also worked for a variety of non-profit organizations and has been a volunteer.

Contact

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Applications are now being accepted for 4 pilot sessions throughout 2006. These sessions will culminate in a national Train the Trainer session building capacity within communities to continue Caring Across the Boundaries: Youth Focus. The role of the youth co-host is to help organize the session (help find a location, order food), assist in running the workshop (training is provided) and develop the invitation list all with the assistance of staff of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society.

Visit www.fncfcs.com/projects/youthFocus.html for details on the application process and forms.
FNCFCS 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)
- Small FNCFCS Agency Membership: 1 - 50 employees ($350)
- Large FNCFCS 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:

www.fncfcs.com

Joining Hands Across the World for Indigenous Children

FNCFCS was proud to work with the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto to co-host the Joining Hands Across the World for Indigenous Children: An International Knowledge Symposium in Toronto on October 25, 2005. A proceedings document, summarizing the nine presentations made by experts on Indigenous child and youth rights from around the world, entitled Joining Hands Across the World Summary Document is now available on line at www.fncfcs.com.

We greatly appreciate the participation of the following presenters in the symposium and for their permission to summarize their presentations so that many others can benefit from their knowledge and perspectives:

- Professor Jaap Doek, Chairperson of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
- Muriel Bamblett, President, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, Australia
- Dr. Roy Laifungbam, Centre for Organizational Research and Education, India
- Yolanda Teran, International Indigenous Rights Expert, Ecuador
- Leslie Du Toit, Director, Child and Youth Care Association for Development, South Africa
- Mr. Terry Cross, Executive Director, National Indian Child Welfare Association, USA
- Kenn Richard and Karen Hill, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, Canada
- Cindy Blackstock, FNCFCS, Canada

Announcing the Release of the FASD Training Report

In partnership with the Pauktuatit Inuit Women’s Association, FNCFCS completed a national survey of training opportunities provided to First Nations and Inuit communities in 2005. The final report which is now available online at www.fncfcs.com features a description of available training as well as resources available to communities to provide FASD supports to First Nations and Inuit children, youth and adults.

The report recommendations identify that additional investments are needed to ensure that FASD training is universally available, addresses the needs of the broad spectrum of people affected by FASD and their families, and is delivered by community facilitators whenever possible. Additional recommendations include investments in support services for persons with FASD, prevention services and research.

FNCFCS expresses our sincere appreciation to the First Nations organizations and individuals who participated in the research project and to Kathryn Irvine who was the lead researcher on the project. We also acknowledge the funding support of First Nations and Inuit Health Branch.