



Central City Foundation
Hope Dialogue Series
Study Guide

Children and youth in our inner city

Tuesday, October 23
4:30 – 7pm | Terminal City Club



**Together,
we build hope.**



The Central City Foundation Hope Dialogue Series

It has been a year since our first Hope Dialogue Series event when we sat down with community leaders to listen and learn about the realities of women living in the inner city. It was a transformative evening that shed light on the complex issues that have led to the marginalization of women in our inner city. You can learn more about the background of this issue, and the topics we explored, by reading the study guide that's available on our [website](#).

Our next event in this series will focus on the challenges of children and youth living in our inner city. As you know, children are the future. We believe that each of them has the right to live a life of dignity. We hope this evening will provide you with a better understanding of the root causes of systemic, cross-generational marginalization and barriers to opportunity. Ultimately, we hope this dialogue will help our community work toward solutions that address inequalities, social injustices and remove barriers for children and youth in our city.

We'd like to acknowledge that this event is being held within the traditional and unceded ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səlilwətaʔ /Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Thank you for taking the time to participate and we hope you find this event to be productive.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Johnstone
President, CEO
Central City Foundation

Why is this discussion important?

1 out of every 5 children in our community lives below the poverty line. This is among the highest child poverty rates in Canada. The causes for this are the past and present inequities and social injustices that exist within our society.

The long term impact of growing up disadvantaged is profound. Without food security, children are less likely to receive the nourishment needed for mental and physical development. They are more likely to struggle in school. They are more likely to spend time in foster care. They are more likely to experience barriers to employment. They are more likely to experience addiction issues. They are more likely to experience mental and physical health issues throughout their lives. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of these children will also spend their adult lives living in poverty.

Marginalized children and youth within our community:

- 50% live in lone-parent, mostly female-led, households
- 1 in 3 off-reserve Indigenous children live in poverty
- 45% of new immigrant children live in poverty
- less than half of foster care children graduate from high school
- youth aging out of foster care are 200 times more likely to become homeless before the age of 25; a 2018 homeless count found 681 homeless children and youth in our city

“We have several young people who are currently in an apartment building that had a fire, the roof is leaking, they are told they have to move out because obviously the building has to be evicted, but they have nowhere to go.”

- SARAH STEWART, AUNT LEAH'S HOUSE



Child and youth inequality: some background

There are many factors that have led to the current barriers that children and youth face in our city. Most of these factors are rooted in inequality created by past and current government policies that discriminate against groups based on race, culture, gender and other factors. We also struggle with the lack of supportive funding for children and families, an ineffective child welfare system and the legacy of the colonialism. People of colour, immigrants, Indigenous peoples and female-led single parent homes are grossly over-represented among the children, youth and families living below the poverty line.

Child Welfare

Our child welfare system has historically failed to provide appropriate solutions that address systemic, cross-generational barriers to opportunity in our city. While only 9% of the children in BC are Indigenous, they represent 60% of the children in care. At the same time, Indigenous communities have been offered little input into programs. 95% of these children are placed in non-Indigenous homes without any consideration of culturally-appropriate care. At age 19, youth are considered adults and expected to care for themselves without further support. 50% of these youth have not completed high school. As a result, a very high percentage of these youth end up homeless and struggling.



“ There are not very many people at 18 and 19 that can just be placed into a home with no real skills of how to manage their own home and nobody to fall back on for help. When you have been uprooted constantly for your whole life, maintaining employment, education and housing are the most difficult things to do. Our homelessness count will continue to grow and grow and grow as we continue to displace a thousand children a year.”

– BARBARA LAWSON,
LU'MA NATIVE HOUSING SOCIETY

The Legacy of Colonialism

The effects of colonialism and government policies that disenfranchised and removed Indigenous people from their lands remain with us. Residential schools, one of the most distressing components of the forced assimilation of Indigenous children, existed in BC for over a century. The last residential school did not close until 1996. More than 150,000 children were taken from their families into these institutions and resulted in the deaths of many thousands of children, the destruction of families and community ties and have had lasting, harmful effects through generations. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released a report detailing the truth of survivors and 94 policy recommendations intended to repair the harm and move forward on a new path of reconciliation.

“You have been removed from your parents by being put in residential schools and now we are taking your children away because you don’t know how to be a parent. Well, you were never in a model where you were able to learn that, and now it’s just been a repeating cycle for them.”

– BARBARA LAWSON, LU'MA NATIVE HOUSING SOCIETY



“One of the biggest barriers is childcare. Having access to quality child care that is within their price range. Another one would be education. We are finding that a lot of our mothers did not complete high school and are wanting to go back to school to complete their grade 12, so we have assisted with a couple of our mums to go back to school.”

– LORETTA MCMILLAN, ABORIGINAL MOTHERS CENTRE

Childcare

The lack of affordable, culturally appropriate and adequate childcare prevents many single mothers from continuing their education or finding full-time work. For many low-income families, the money earned from a job may not even cover their childcare costs. As a result, they remain in the welfare system among the conditions that create poverty for the next generation.

Immigrants

Throughout the history of our city, we have witnessed the negative effects of numerous policies that discriminate against several immigrant communities and have created the conditions that lead to poverty and isolation. We have also failed to acknowledge the supports needed for newcomers to succeed in our community.

“For a lot of parents, spending years learning English is a financial burden, so many will find odd jobs here and there as opposed to finishing their studies. More often than not you find that the children and youth are translators for them and that’s another layer of responsibility for them.”

– TANH LAM, MOUNT PLEASANT NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE



"I feel amazing. It's incredible. I didn't think I'd be able to bounce back. I really didn't. I feel like I can do anything."

- YOUTH CLIENT AT ASHNOLA





"We know this is going to have a ripple effect throughout their entire lives."

- ROB PARRY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF KIDSAFE



"Living in this housing gives me a real sense of security."

- RESIDENT OF IMOUTO HOUSING FOR YOUNG WOMEN



Where do we go from here?

While there may not be quick or easy solutions to the long-standing, complex challenges faced by children, youth and families in our inner city, we believe that working together as a community can make a difference. This process begins by engaging in dialogue with concerned members of our community and those working on the front lines of this issue.

Community leaders participating in this event:

Aboriginal Mother Centre Society
Barbara Lawson, *Executive Director*

The Aboriginal Mother Centre opened in 2002 to address the needs of Aboriginal women. Located in the east end of Vancouver, this culturally sensitive environment helps move at-risk mothers and children off the streets and provides the support, tools and resources a mother needs to rebuild her health, self esteem and skills to regain and retain her child. The centre, grounded in a grass roots setting, creates a healing community to nurture children and families to become vital members of their communities.

Aunt Leah's Place
Sarah Stewart, *Executive Director*

For 30 years, Aunt Leah's Place has been helping kids in foster care and young mothers achieve a better future by providing guidance, supported housing, job training and coaching on essential life skills. They believe every individual deserves to feel safe, cared for, and have a sense of belonging. Unfortunately, this is not a reality for many teens in the foster care system. When they "age out" of government care at 19, they find themselves completely alone. Aunt Leah's Place often provides the only thread of care and continuity for youth whose lives are marked by abuse, neglect, abandonment and multiple foster home placements.

Family Services of Greater Vancouver - Street Youth Job Action

Karin Kirkpatrick, *CEO*
Marnie Goldenberg,
Director of Youth Services

Founded in 1928, Family Services of Greater Vancouver is a charitable organization that inspires and supports people in reaching their full potential. Supporting vulnerable youth through a collection of services such as drop-in centres, safe spaces, supportive housing and other programs, FSGV's mission is to ensure children are nurtured, youth find optimism, adults feel empowered and parents make choices that build strong families.

Kidsafe
Quincey Kirschner, *Executive Director*

The KidSafe Project Society was founded in 1993 by a group of concerned citizens, The Vancouver Sun newspaper and public school teachers in response to a local tragedy that saw a young child assaulted and abandoned when left home alone during school break. The community galvanized into action forming KidSafe, with the mission to provide nurturing safe havens for vulnerable inner-city children when schools are traditionally closed.

Lu'ma Native Housing Society
Margaret Dick, *Youth Mentorship Program Manager*

Lu'ma Native Housing Society was established in 1980 to provide affordable housing to Aboriginal families and individuals with low to moderate income. Lu'ma currently owns and operates an affordable housing portfolio of just under 500 units of housing. Lu'ma also provides a broad range of services that improve social determinants of health.

Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House

Nilda Borrino, *Director of Family Resource Programs*
Thanh Lam, *Youth and Settlement Services Coordinator*

Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House plays a vital role in fostering a safe and healthy neighbourhood, with a view towards enhancing community development. Focusing on community strengths and assets, MPNH works with neighbours, community partners and other organizations to implement a broad range of activities based on community needs and priorities.

Pacific Community Resource Society - Ashnola at the Crossing

Ingrid Kastens, *Executive Director*
Debbie Anderson-Eng, *Director of Youth Services*

An award-winning, accredited, not-for-profit society serving Lower Mainland communities since 1984, PCRS partners with a wide range of individuals, businesses, other agencies, and governments to inspire healthy and inclusive communities through leadership and collaboration. Ashnola at the Crossing, a CCF social purpose real estate project which is operated by PCRS, is a provincial, evidence-based program supporting youth and young adults who are in need of long-term residential treatment for substance use concerns.

StreetFront Alternative School

Trevor Stokes, *Teacher*
Dr. Andrew Schofield,
Principal, Britannia School

StreetFront is a Vancouver School Board alternative education program based out of Britannia Secondary School. StreetFront approaches education with an emphasis on physical activities and outdoor experiences including Physical Education, Outdoor Education, Planning, Woodworking and Foods classes.

TRRUST - Youth Transitioning from Care Collective Impact Group

Lucie Honey-Ray

This initiative is hosted by McCreary Centre Society, a non-government, not-for-profit organization committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation and community-based projects.

Urban Native Youth Association

Cheryl Robinson, *Executive Director*
Rae-Anne LeBrun, *Cultural Wellness Counsellor*

Urban Native Youth Association was formed in 1988 to address concerns facing Indigenous youth, at a time when growing numbers of young people began leaving reserves for the city. Thirty years later, young people continue to arrive in Vancouver with few job skills, minimal training or education, and little or no knowledge of where to go for help. UNYA is meeting these needs by providing a wide range of services, resources, and opportunities that support Vancouver's Indigenous youth to excel. Today, UNYA delivers 20+ programs, with 175+ volunteers, 100 staff, and more than 300 community partners.

Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services

Taelor Taylor, *Child & Youth Cultural Engagement Coordinator*

VACFSS is a non-profit society providing services to urban Aboriginal children and families living in the Greater Vancouver area. VACFSS has been a child and family serving agency since 1992 and continues to evolve its programs to better reflect the diverse cultures of their clients, with a focus on achieving better outcomes for children and families.

Vancouver Native Health Society

Robyn Vermette, *COO*
Mary Clifford, *Director of Early Years*

Vancouver Native Health Society was established in 1991 with a mission to improve and promote the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of individuals, focusing on the Aboriginal community residing in Greater Vancouver. Today, they deliver comprehensive medical, counselling and social services to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Aboriginal community.

About Central City Foundation

Where others won't invest, we will.

We connect neighbours and resources to transform our communities through positive change. We listen to our community partners and fund innovative solutions that fit their needs. We help our neighbours in three ways – by providing funding and support for programs, capital projects and social purpose real estate.

Central City Foundation has more than 100 years of experience providing safe, secure and affordable spaces for community organizations. We believe this is the key to creating innovative and effective community programs. We own five social purpose buildings and provide housing and space to support services like the Vancouver Women's Health Collective and the Phil Bouvier Family Centre at highly subsidized rents.

For every dollar Central City Foundation spends, we generate \$3.90 in social benefit.



Some of the community partners we've recently supported through grants:

Aboriginal Mother Centre
 Aunt Leah's Independent Lifeskills Society
 Downtown Eastside Women's Centre
 Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative
 The Dugout Drop In Centre
 East Van Community House Centre Society
 EMBERS
 Groundswell
 JustWork Economic Initiative JustPotters
 Overdose Prevention Society
 Pacifica Treatment Centre
 Streetfront Alternative Program
 Binners' Project
 Tradeworks
 WISH

Notes

Notes



Central City Foundation is located on the traditional and unceded ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səl̓ílwətaʔ / Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



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