



Statement

Nov. 20, 2019

For Immediate Release

Thirty years ago today, the United Nations ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* and it has been 28 years since the treaty was ratified by Canada. The *UNCRC* includes 54 articles that spell out the rights to health, safety, well-being, culture and education to which every child in the world is entitled.

I am proud to celebrate Child Rights Education Week (Nov. 17 to 23) and specifically today, World Children’s Day, marking the birth of the *UNCRC*.

In this anniversary year, it is important that we reflect on how children's rights are being upheld and protected. The *UNCRC* provides the foundation for all the work of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth and our team of Advocates consistently refer to it as they help children and youth have their rights respected and recognized when dealing with child-serving systems in British Columbia.

But it is also important that we recognize the efforts of these children and youth themselves, many of whom take time with our Advocates to learn about their rights, act on them, find their voices and hold each other up. I come across such children and youth nearly every day in my work as Representative and yet still I constantly marvel at their courage and resilience. The *UNCRC* provides them a foundation, but they are the bearers of those rights.

There have also been many great adult champions of the *UNCRC* over the years – perhaps most notably child rights activist Senator Landon Pearson, who helped develop the Convention and ensure that it was ratified by Canada in 1991. Senator Pearson said: “Every child is a new chance for the whole human race.” I can’t think of a more appropriate quote to recall on this special day.

Another great defender of children’s rights is Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Gitksan activist for child welfare and executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. She has fought, and won, a 12-year battle with the federal government of Canada to stop its discrimination against First Nations children and families through the inferior child welfare services it has provided.

With the federal government appealing that Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling, however, I am reminded that we still have work to do in this country when it comes to respecting children’s rights. Of concern to me is the inequality that many children still experience even in a nation and province as wealthy and privileged as ours – particularly First Nations, Metis, Inuit and other

Indigenous and racialized children and youth when it comes to *UNCRC* Articles 8 (identity) and 9 (right to live with caring family).

Despite those challenges, however, there is much to celebrate today. We can be proud of those who forged the *UNCRC* and of those who work daily to ensure it is adhered to.

You can find a full copy of the *UNCRC* Articles here:

https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf?_ga=2.1531320.829262038.1574201618-837760967.1574201618

You can find a child-friendly version of the *UNCRC* here:

<https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/gb/reports/humanitarian/uncrc19-child-friendly.pdf>

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth