



Statement

Jan. 19, 2020

For Immediate Release

British Columbia and Canada lost a champion for fairness and justice and a powerful and wise voice on child welfare with the passing of the Hon. Ted Hughes on Friday. Our entire organization honours the enormous legacy of a great and just man, a legacy which includes the creation of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth itself.

Ted lived an extraordinarily interesting, meaningful and principled life. Alongside his wife Helen, he devoted himself to public service and contributed both as a volunteer and in a professional capacity as a lawyer, a judge and an adjudicator. He served as judge of the Court of Queen's Bench of Saskatchewan, as Deputy Attorney General of B.C. and as the first Conflict of Interest Commissioner for this province.

Among his many notable achievements, Ted served as federal chief adjudicator regarding harms and abuse arising out of Indian Residential Schools. He also conducted an independent review of B.C.'s child protection system in 2006 – a review that resulted in the creation of the RCY. In 2012-13, he presided over a public inquiry in Manitoba also addressing critical child protection issues relevant to that province.

In terms of the contribution Ted made to child welfare in B.C., what stands out for me is that he spoke so clearly about the inequities experienced by Indigenous children, youth and families and the impact of residential schools and colonization long before it was common to do so in mainstream discussions. His 2006 report is as relevant today as when published – such was his extraordinary ability to deeply understand the core issues and what needed to be done in the interests of respect, equity, fairness and justice.

Ted remained firmly connected to our Office until his passing. He was beloved by staff, who recognized him as the “father of the RCY” and he supported this Office and offered his counsel during the tenure of all three Representatives. In recognition of their tremendous contributions, Helen and Ted last year received the Janusz Korczak Medal for Child Rights Advocacy from the Korczak Association of Canada in collaboration with the RCY.

On a personal note, Ted was Deputy Attorney General when I began working in the Cabinet Secretariat, including with the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Social Policy. Watching him in action, especially when he chaired meetings in which difficult conversations were required, was a transformative experience early in my career. It seemed to me that Ted was 10 feet tall! To have the privilege during the past 16 months of visiting with him, learning from him and hearing first-hand what he thought the RCY could achieve and stand for, and sharing my vision for the Office to gather his advice, was an incredible gift.

When we last shared a meal, just before Christmas, he did what he always did – listened intently, asked wonderful and thoughtful questions, demonstrated support and respect, and gently offered wise and principled counsel. Such an extraordinary man – he will be deeply missed.

From myself and our organization, our deepest condolences to Helen and their entire family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Charlesworth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth