

Still Looking, Still Learning

Second Anniversary of Don't Look Away
July 16, 2026

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Introduction

On July 16, 2026, the Representative for Children and Youth brought together more than 500 people for Still Looking, Still Learning: Two Years After Don't Look Away. The virtual gathering marked two years since the release of [Don't Look Away: How one boy's story has the power to shift a system of care for children and youth](#). The report combined an investigation into the death of an 11-year-old boy in the Fraser Valley with a systemic review of the conditions that contributed to his death and continue to affect too many children, youth and families across British Columbia.

Don't Look Away issued a collective call to action to move toward a true child well-being system of care in B.C. Two years later, the gathering created space to reflect on the review's continuing influence: what has shifted, what remains unfinished and what kind of leadership is now required to better support children, youth, families and communities.

The gathering was held with deep care and respect for the child and family at the heart of Don't Look Away. It was not about retelling a painful story. It was about honouring what was shared, holding close what was learned and continuing to ask what must change so that children's well-being is centred across systems, communities and decision-making.

Since the release of Don't Look Away, RCY has continued to monitor and publicly report, engage with government and community partners, and host the We Are Not Looking Away convening series. These gatherings have created space to keep listening, learning collectively and sustaining attention on the conditions affecting children, youth and families. RCY is committed to not look away: to keep returning to what children, families and communities have shared, to ask whether plans and actions are producing meaningful change, and to carry that learning into continued advocacy and accountability.

This What We Heard report brings together reflections shared by cultural hosts, government representatives, RCY, invited speakers and participants. It summarizes the ideas, experiences, questions and directions that emerged through the presentations, leadership conversation, small-group discussions and Zoom chat. It is not a transcript or

a statement of consensus. It is intended to carry forward the collective learning from the gathering and support continued reflection, accountability and action.

This report can be read alongside RCY's separate two-year progress report, which assesses government's progress on the recommendations in Don't Look Away and No Time to Wait, Parts 1 and 2. While the progress report examines commitments, actions and evidence of impact, this report focuses on what people brought to the gathering and what their contributions suggest is needed next.

Welcome by the Representative for Children and Youth

Representative Jennifer Charlesworth welcomed participants and acknowledged the many people joining from across British Columbia and beyond, including young people, families, Indigenous leaders, community partners, service providers and representatives from government.

She began by returning to the child and family at the heart of Don't Look Away. Their experiences, courage and generosity made the review possible and continue to carry a responsibility for everyone involved in the work. Jennifer emphasized that the gathering was not intended to revisit their story in detail, but to honour what was shared by asking whether the systems meant to support children and families are changing in meaningful ways.

Jennifer reminded participants that the well-being of children and youth, particularly those who are most vulnerable, remains RCY's North Star. She reflected that Don't Look Away called for more than isolated program changes or improvements within a single ministry. It called for a fundamental shift toward a child and family well-being system grounded in early help, family support, shared responsibility, Indigenous rights and jurisdiction, stronger accountability, and coordinated action across government.

She acknowledged the effort taking place across the system and the progress made in some areas. At the same time, she cautioned that movement is not the same as impact, and a plan is not the same as transformation. The most important measure of progress

is whether children, youth and families experience services and supports differently in their daily lives.

Jennifer invited participants to approach the gathering with honesty, curiosity and a willingness to learn. She encouraged them to consider not only what is being done, but what is changing, what continues to get in the way and what each person can do to help move the work forward.

Opening prayer and cultural grounding

RCY cultural advisor, Judy Wilson, offered an opening prayer for the convening. Her prayer thanked the Creator, ancestors, and Mother Earth for water, energy, and natural teachings. She acknowledged on-going current hardships (conflict, water scarcity, land destruction) that make reforming the child welfare system harder. She referenced the Don't Look Away report whose recommendations were shaped by children, youth, families, and experts, were fully accepted by the minister and call for belonging, safety, and family connection for every child. Judy prayed for the ancestors' continued guidance, to protect Indigenous children and end the discrimination they face. She closed with thanks for the gathering and for continuing this work, alongside government's role in the needed systemic change.

Reflections from government

Minister Jodie Wickens and Parliamentary Secretary Amna Shah were invited to share the government's perspective on progress since the release of Don't Look Away, the work currently underway and the challenges that remain. Their remarks are included here as part of the broader convening record. Their inclusion reflects RCY's commitment to hearing from those responsible for leading change, while maintaining its independent role in monitoring progress, identifying gaps and holding government accountable for results.

Minister Wickens' Remarks

Minister Wickens opened by acknowledging Cultural Advisors Judy Wilson and Wedlidi Speck for opening the gathering, and thanked government and public service

representatives, community and sector partners, families and people with lived experience for their participation. Marking the second anniversary of Don't Look Away, she honoured Colby's life, reflected on the childhood and future he should have had and acknowledged the loss experienced by his family and community and the opportunities missed to give him the care and support he deserved. She reaffirmed government's responsibility to keep looking, listening and learning, and to confront the systemic failures behind his death. She said Don't Look Away continues to call for a shift toward earlier action and better-coordinated services, and that families still experience a system that is fragmented, reactive and hard to navigate.

The Minister's central focus was the newly released [Child and Youth Well-being Action Plan and Outcomes Framework](#), developed over two years through cross-ministry collaboration as government's response to the commitment made after Don't Look Away. She described the five-year plan as a whole-of-government roadmap, not solely an MCFD initiative, meant to align services, sharpen priorities and accountability and improve outcomes for children and youth. She framed the longer-term vision as a shift from fragmented, ministry-by-ministry services toward a "one-family, one-system" approach with shared accountability and integrated planning, while respecting the distinct roles and jurisdictions of First Nations in child and family services. She outlined five interconnected areas of focus: strengthening conditions for family well-being and earlier help, preventing gender-based and family violence, improving service coordination, advancing Indigenous self-determination in child and family services, and supporting children and youth facing intersecting barriers. The plan draws together existing commitments, including the response to the Stanton review, the redesign of services for children and youth with support needs, Connected Services BC and work on First Nations jurisdiction over child welfare. The accompanying Outcomes Framework sets out four areas of well-being (material, physical health, social, emotional and cultural and cognitive and life preparedness) meant to link government action to measurable outcomes and evidence-informed decisions.

Minister Wickens also described plans to engage children and youth, families, people with lived experience, frontline providers, advocates and other partners, including distinctions-based engagement with First Nations, Modern Treaty Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous partners, to identify gaps and priorities and inform implementation. Government is also mapping services across government and

community to find gaps, duplication and points of connection, work that may inform future structural changes toward a more connected, prevention-focused system. She closed by calling the work transformational while stressing government cannot do it alone. She encouraged participants to review the plan and framework and provide input, thanked Indigenous leaders, young people, families, advocates and frontline providers for shaping the work, and emphasized the importance of young people having a meaningful voice in decisions that affect them.

Parliamentary Secretary Amna Shah's Remarks

Parliamentary Secretary Shah marked the second anniversary of Don't Look Away by honouring Colby's memory, acknowledging the grief carried by his family and community, and stressing the collective responsibility to ensure children and youth get care and support when they need it. Drawing on her upbringing in Surrey and volunteer work as a coach and with the Surrey Food Bank, she said these experiences shaped her belief that investing in young people benefits entire communities. As Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Addictions, she said early support can change the course of a young person's life, especially for those facing anxiety, trauma, depression or substance use, and that reaching families before a crisis reduces suffering and builds resilience. She linked these priorities to the Child and Youth Well-being Action Plan and Outcomes Framework, calling it a commitment to a more coordinated, compassionate and prevention-focused system built with Indigenous partners, communities and people with lived experience. Her priorities for mental health included easier access to support close to home and school, expanded wraparound services through Foundry and integrated child and youth teams, earlier help in places families already trust, welcoming spaces where young people feel belonging, culturally safe services grounded in First Nations' own strengths and traditions, and a new provincial framework for youth substance use and wellness. She called the work generational, cautioning that no single policy will deliver the systemic change required.

Speaking as Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives, Shah described systemic racism as a barrier to equitable access to government services and tied this work to BC's Anti-Racism Action Plan and its two-year commitments to remove barriers. She pointed to plans to give First Nations clearer information about available resources so they can participate more fully as decision-makers in child and family services, and to strengthen staff training on how racism operates both systemically and individually, with the aim of

fairer treatment for Indigenous and racialized children and youth. She closed by framing continued action as a responsibility owed to Colby, his family, families across the province and future generations, and described government as ready to listen, learn and work in partnership toward a province where children and youth can thrive.

Two years later: movement, impact and the North Star

Jennifer opened her presentation by reaffirming child well-being as the “North Star” guiding RCY’s work, with particular attention to children and youth who are most vulnerable. She emphasized that understanding how children arrive at a point of crisis often reveals earlier opportunities when families could have received meaningful support.

She revisited the core themes of Don’t Look Away: the need for an all-of-government approach to child well-being; supporting children and families before crisis; addressing colonial harms and upholding Indigenous rights, jurisdiction and self-determination; strengthening accountability and information-sharing; and confronting the pervasive violence in children’s lives. She stressed that child well-being cannot rest with MCFD alone. Public services delivering income security, housing, health, education, disability supports, justice, and public safety all shape the lives of children and families, as does opportunities to experience connection and belonging to culture, community and a sense of hope for the future.

Jennifer acknowledged the significant effort underway across government, including the Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan, anti-racism and data initiatives, education initiatives, improvements related to family violence, and work to strengthen services and supports. At the same time, she cautioned that “movement is not the same as impact” and “a plan is not the same as transformation.” Progress remains uneven, and RCY continues to see high volumes of reported critical injuries and deaths, fragmented responses to families, delayed access to services, gaps in accountability and information-sharing, and highly strained workforces. Families should not have to rely on persistence, luck or knowing the right person to receive the support they need.

Her presentation highlighted the following:

Quick-impact recommendations: RCY has observed progress on approximately one-third of the quick-impact recommendations in Don't Look Away and on all 17 recommendations from the two No Time to Wait reports. There has also been progress in identifying, assessing and tracking situations involving family violence, creating opportunities for earlier and more informed responses.

A promising example from housing: The Ministry of Housing has expanded eligibility for rental assistance, invested in affordable, community and Indigenous housing, and established portable rental supports for people leaving gender-based violence. Jennifer highlighted this work as an example of how action outside the traditional child welfare system can help stabilize families and prevent crisis.

Collective responsibilities: Progress has been reported across all five areas identified in Don't Look Away: advancing child well-being, strengthening family supports, addressing violence, improving accountability and supporting Indigenous jurisdiction. However, significant work remains to translate commitments into consistent experiences of support for children, youth and families.

The Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan: Jennifer described the plan as an important, first-of-its-kind step, supported by multiple ministries and accompanied by an outcomes framework. She welcomed the establishment of a deputy ministers' project board to guide its development and implementation. She also reiterated the need for stronger, non-partisan governance through the Legislative Assembly so that responsibility for child well-being is sustained across ministries and political cycles.

Accountability and information-sharing: Jennifer recognized progress in anti-racism data, data innovation and mechanisms for tracking information more effectively. However, she noted that children and families continue to experience the consequences of professionals and systems holding separate pieces of information without bringing them together into a coordinated response. Information must be shared safely and respectfully, particularly in relation to Indigenous children and families, but privacy and organizational boundaries cannot become reasons for inaction.

What enables progress: Jennifer identified shifting mindsets, a shared plan, clearer accountability and stronger relationships as essential conditions for transformation. She

noted early signs of movement away from systems centred primarily on protection, risk and liability toward approaches focused on helping children and families thrive. Relationships, trust and shared responsibility are central to sustaining that shift.

What continues to get in the way: Coordination within and across ministries remains inconsistent. Ministries continue to advance separate plans, initiatives and commitments that do not always come together into a coherent response for children and families. Jennifer also cautioned against allowing the genuine complexity of systems change to become an excuse for delayed action.

A broader government responsibility: Jennifer called for the rights and well-being of children and youth to be reflected across ministry mandates and ministers' mandate letters. Children and youth may represent only 20 per cent of the current population, but they represent 100 per cent of the province's future.

Jennifer concluded that RCY remains hopeful but clear-eyed. Commitments and plans matter, but the real measure of progress is whether children, youth and families experience meaningful change. Transformation will be evident when families receive help before crisis, Indigenous rights and jurisdiction are upheld in practice, workers have the capacity to respond well, ministries no longer operate in silos, and children, youth and families themselves say that their experiences have changed.

Conversation on leadership and the conditions for systems change

The dialogue, hosted by Jennifer, explored leadership and systems change in child welfare, drawing on Sir Stuart Carlton's experience transforming child protection services in North Yorkshire, England, and Hereditary Chief Wedlidi Speck's Indigenous leadership perspective (Namgis First Nation).

The Representative opened with the recognition that, though there are differences in culture, history and geography between B.C. communities and the UK, there are also similarities. Young people and their families are experiencing the same issues: poverty, housing and food insecurity, intergenerational trauma, unresolved violence and fragmented, discriminatory and shame-based services. Given the shared experiences for

children and families in most child welfare systems, there is much we can learn from a conversation about what has been done in North Yorkshire, UK, and here in B.C. as we keep our hearts and minds open.

Throughout the conversation, Wedlidi and Stuart reflected on humility, servant leadership, letting go of the need to "be right," and personal accountability alongside systemic accountability. The dialogue was generally guided by several questions, though the discussion was wide-ranging. These questions are noted below to guide the summary notes.

What do leaders need to be mindful of?

Stuart first recognized the words of Judy Wilson: leadership needs to be rich in love, kindness and generosity. Some key learnings included:

- Being safe just isn't enough. There is no healing with safety alone. As leaders, we need to focus on both safety and love for healing to happen.
- It's absolutely the job of leaders to make sure you've got the right conditions in which successful, meaningful practice can flourish. Never forget what it is like practicing on the ground, directly with children, youth and families. Our job as leaders is to understand the lived experience every day of children in our communities and the lived experience of our staff working there. This allows good, relational practice to flourish that is strength-based and relational.

"It is no good giving social workers or frontline workers caseloads of a hundred, then blaming them when they can't do that. It's irrational, even criminal, to some extent."

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast"

"A culture of practice: the right conditions, the way you do things, why you do things, and why it's important to do them the right way."

- Be relentlessly optimistic. If you aren't, who is going to be? But have your eyes on the prize constantly, firmly fixed on the destination you're heading for. Use complexity as a catalyst for movement and impact.

"I often visualize that like a rocking horse. If I feel like a rocking horse with lots of movement, but no progress, slow down, re-examine what needs to change and why, to have the impact that children and young people deserve. "

"You've got to be the change you want to see. Live it every day. That's the role of leadership."

How do we create the conditions for good practice as leaders?

Stuart reflected on a range of key levers in response to this question.

- People need to have reasonable caseloads. If strong relational practice and meeting the needs of children and families on a daily basis creates safety and love, then social workers need a reasonable number of people to do it for.

"Workers are agents of change. It is not just case management."

- Front-line workers need great supervision. They need their development and training to be linked entirely to the job you're trying to achieve and the B.C. practice model.
- As a leader, keep three big questions in front of you all the time:
 - What do I know about the quality of practice

- How do I know it?
- And what am I doing to improve it?

Stuart reinforced that this is not about performance but the day-to-day focus on how to measure the actual impact of service on the ground and quality of practice.

- It is really important that families are involved in providing direct input on their experience as a way to support good decision-making. Good leaders support practice by knowing what is going on in their system and really understand and report on it.
- To support practice, leaders must be visible in the services being provided. Personally find great practice, encourage it, demand it, enforce it

“If leaders aren’t engaging in practice, how do you know how it is going?
How do you know what’s happening in your organization so that all
these things work well.”

When you talk about relational practice, how do you shift the orientation from protection to early help and to being in relationship with families?

Stuart spoke about the mindsets about safety and protection as decades old. Shifting these was a significant challenge and took time. Stuart reflected on England’s own crisis 15-20 years ago where they were seeing case after case where terrible things were happening to children and there wasn’t relational practice. The things that they expected to be done weren’t being done. People weren’t talking to each other, cooperating, or working in partnership. They weren’t working with families in the way they wanted them to. And that was because a system of compliancy and risk aversion had been built based on years of things going wrong. It was a system that didn’t create the conditions for good relational practice to occur. Following a review by Eileen Monroe (2011) that called for the need to reset practice from a relational point of view, the focus was then on stripping away all that was holding good practice back.

And so began the journey of change. Stuart highlighted how important it was important to keep on asking, what do we want our practice, our model, the way we engage with children and families to look like?

"In the old model, social workers would knock on the door, usually of women. We would not think about their partners, where the grandparents or the aunties and uncles were. It was all focused on the female. In our new model, we now bring everyone together who loves the child. Social workers sit less behind computers, doing compliancy as the first urgent piece of work, and spend more time finding the child's community: the people who love them.

The first thought is about keeping them safe and loved. That's how you start to change. That's how you start to change the organizational boundaries and the view people have of services."

"You find safe uncertainty by working with families to create their own safety and plans and you support them in achieving them."

"The best piece of feedback I ever used to get from our families – and yes, I do know the feedback, because yes, we gather it, because that's the way you know the quality – was family saying to us, "you never made me feel like I wasn't good enough."

Stuart reflected on how to bring people along with you through change. He talked about learning to slow down and acknowledge that writing a strategy alone and presenting it as the plan. He emphasized that such an approach doesn't bring people with you. Instead of starting with vision and strategy documents, they started with a collective conversation about values and what mattered about how they wanted to work – with honesty, relational practice, asking difficult questions, and evidence-based, strength-based practice. They co-created a model of practice from the ground up through staff engagement, and the end result reflected what he wanted for the area, but it belonged to everyone. The shared model then became the daily decision-making filter for everyone.

An important highlight was the observation that a critical requirement is honesty about what is not working. This required openness and difficult conversations about "uncomfortable truths" in the system.

An example Stuart provided was that the system claimed to be "relational," but child protection practices were actually breaking relationships daily - dislocating children from family, community, and school. He named this contradiction directly: continuing the same approach while expecting different results is irrational.

"So it's not true, is it? Child protection does not heal or mend relationships. It breaks them, it destroys them, it makes it worse. It dislocates children from their communities, from their relationships, from their schools. It does the exact opposite of what we want. So it is irrational to think that if we carry on doing the same thing we will get a different outcome. It is absolutely irrational."

He spoke to a necessary foundation of a shared belief, owned by the whole organization, that children belong in family and community.

"The organization's job is to create conditions for those relationships to flourish. Structure and policy were then built from that foundation, not the other way around."

How is our leadership influenced by working in the complexity of many cultures?

Wedlidi reflected on his own experience of cultural complexity, growing up in an Indigenous community, and then working with MCFD and other provincial organizations. It has required him to embrace different leadership skill sets.

He grew up on the Namgis First Nation during a period when colonialism was still actively operating, with residential schools, banishment, potlatch bans, and Indian day schools, all aimed at cultural erasure ("kill the Indian in the child"). From these

experiences, his leadership emerged from decades of listening and learning what shaped his communities and how healing conversations happened. Part of this was personal: his own family spanned both an Anglican tradition and a more traditional practice (food harvesting, ceremony). Wedlidi learned to navigate between two cultural worlds within his own family. That navigation became a training ground for standing in the difference of worldviews. It required curiosity, openness, and courage. It has led to his approach to circle as leadership:

- Every seat in the circle holds both leadership and wisdom - authority isn't concentrated at the top
- Success depends on staying connected to shared values and principles of practice
- He describes calling the circle to mind (curiosity), heart (treating the group like family/community rather than hierarchy), and belly (something felt/embodied, implied as commitment or grounding)
- This shifts the orientation from "I" to "we" - moving from hierarchy to collaborative, relational practice.

Wedlidi was curious about leadership in cultural complexity and how this shows up in England. In response, Stuart spoke about how deprivation varies drastically by community and region, and child outcomes follow this. Children born in certain areas will live 15-20 years less, be less healthy, and have worse job prospects than kids born elsewhere. Black children are significantly over-represented in the care population.

"Birth circumstance is the single greatest determinant of life outcome."

What this implies for the work is a relentless focus on equity, and not uniformity.

The job is not to apply the same intervention evenly across the whole population. That is not equity but rather false neutrality. Some communities and families need more attention, more resources, more care than others. The intention is to work alongside communities, helping them find their own strengths, networks, and solutions, not imposing solutions from outside. In practical terms, this means encouraging, reflecting, and asking the hard questions in a way that helps families find their own path to safety

and love for their child, rather than dictating it.

How can we address the fear that seems to underpin our current system?

Wedlidi commented on the idea that B.C. currently has a system that's built on fear. Families experience fear, but also practitioners experience fear, because they're afraid of making a mistake. Calling in the circle and bringing family together to say, who loves this child, and who can contribute to their safety, is very uncertain work. He expressed curiosity about how we can help, as leaders, practitioners and colleagues, to challenge the fear base that keeps us constrained.

Stuart reflected that open mind and open heart are essential. He reinforced that he only ever made one promise ever to his staff: that he would never blame them.

"It is very rarely about a worker, but about the systemic approach to the way you do the work."

"You may see politicians calling for social workers and frontline staff to be hung from the nearest lamppost. We will work our way through that, and I will never blame you."

He would tell politicians that he had one of the best systems of child protection in the world, but he could never promise that a child would not die under his watch.

To do this would be lying. But he could guarantee that, with the way his staff worked, this would be minimal. He could commit that they would always have done their best. There is learning and transparency in every child's serious injury and death, and each one is reviewed to understand what went wrong, why it went wrong, and what it tells us about the system. The intention behind this is to improve the system, not blame the worker.

How does accountability play a part in transforming the child welfare system?

Stuart noted that accountability is really important and reinforced that accountability rests with senior leadership. It was always clear the accountability sat with him. In his

role in North Yorkshire, he was the statutory Director of Children's Services with accountability laid out in statute. That gave him the ability to question, push back, and challenge. Essential to this was a system that could know and understand itself well and that was built to answer the same three questions: What do you know about the quality of practice? How do you know it? And what are you going to do to improve it?

To respond to these questions, they had to measure performance and the quality of practice. Their measurement system draws on a range of sources, including actual service users who are asked about how that service felt, worked and performed. It preferences constant reflective practice audits by staff and teams to think about what they did in a case, what worked, what didn't and how might you apply the learning in another case?

Stuart reiterated that it's about constantly inquiring into and improving the system, not only through continually monitoring and understanding what your system is like but backing this up with an independent regulatory body that would come and check the effectiveness of the system and accuracy of the internal assessments and audits.

Wedlidi story about leadership: I was sharing with friends earlier that, you know, my dad approached me and he said, son, one day you're going to be a chief. He said, your mentorship is going to start right now. And then he reached over and he handed me a broom and told me to sweep the floor.

Stuart story about leadership: That reminds me of the NASA story of turning up and seeing someone sweeping the floor and the president asking them, what they are you doing and the response being: "I'm putting a man on the moon".

What do you have to let go of to allow change to happen?

Both Wedlidi and Stuart reflected on this question. Both reinforced that sustainable change requires both institutional courage (naming hard truths, tolerating risk, resisting fear-driven compliance) and relational humility (recognizing wisdom already exists in families and communities, not just in professional systems).

Some of the factors that were noted as creating space for deep systemic change include:

- Treating crises as seminal moments for change, even knowing transformation may take 10-15 years
- Knowing that change requires hosting honest conversations and staying relentlessly focused on quality of practice
- Naming uncomfortable truths by acknowledging that practices everyone believed were "right", are actually producing dreadful outcomes for children and families, and building something to counter that, even against institutional resistance
- High-quality practice becomes its own defense because it is hard for critics to attack something when they can see it working
- Directly engaging families and communities to ensure their wisdom is part of the solution. When practitioners approach families with respect and directly invite that conversation, the common response is relief: it wasn't as bad as feared, and most people genuinely want to do right by their children
- Letting go of "safe certainty" with leaders releasing the need to always be "right" because excessive fear of error leads to being overly cautious which itself harms families and produces worse outcomes than the problem being addressed
- Naming uncomfortable truths about the damage that fear and compliance cause, exercising bravery and the resolve to hold steady when something inevitably goes wrong again, rather than retreating to old defensive patterns.
- The foundation for this kind of system - love, kindness, and professional generosity - must be explicitly reframed not as soft or weak, but as forms of strength and leadership

Stuart spoke at the end of the session about his leadership approach.

“Your job as a leader is to connect all that up so everyone feels a part of the right system.”

“Child welfare is a team effort. The people running my computer systems, the people running my HR systems, the people providing us business support, they are all part of my system and team that is going to deliver those outcomes for children we want to see.”

Wedlidi spoke at the end of the session. He reflected on leadership:

“Throw yourself like a seed in the soil of your own soul. Germinate that seed and become the leader you're intended to be. The fruits of your tree are going to be beneficial to you and everybody else.”

He shared some leadership teachings:

- Lead with curiosity, openness, and courage
- Use the circle as a model of shared wisdom and non-hierarchical practice
- Heal intergenerational and colonial trauma alongside systems change.

What we heard from participants

As Jennifer, Stuart and Wedlidi shared their perspectives, participants contributed their own knowledge, experiences and questions through the chat and in more than 50 small-group conversations. Their contributions were an important part of the convening, adding depth, challenge and practical insight to the discussion. Participants expressed appreciation for the vision being described, while also speaking candidly about the continuing distance between that vision and the realities experienced by children, youth, families, communities and those working within the system here in B.C.

Move from compliance to relational practice

Participants strongly connected with Stuart's emphasis on relationships, trust and bringing people along through change. They described the current child-serving system as compliance-focused and risk-averse, with frontline practice too often shaped by rules, reporting requirements and fear of making mistakes.

"Compliance-focused and risk-averse are ways I would absolutely describe the MCFD system, from both my time working in child protection and my eight-plus years with the Syilx Nation now." ~Participant, Zoom chat

Participants questioned how relational practice can be sustained when legislation gives systems significant power over children and families, with limited oversight. They called for a shift away from surveillance and toward approaches that recognize strengths, respond to families' needs and avoid making people feel judged or unworthy.

"Everything that comes down to the frontline is about compliance.... The language is very shaming." ~Participant, Zoom chat

Some also cautioned against "hero leadership" that relies on one individual to drive change. Sustainable transformation requires leaders to build relationships, share authority and create the conditions for others to participate in shaping and carrying the work forward.

"I would be curious to hear about how relational practice happens in the context of extreme power through legislation with little oversight." ~ Participant, Zoom chat

Closing the gap between plans and implementation

Participants expressed support for the vision of a more coordinated child and youth well-being system but questioned whether implementation is already reproducing the fragmentation the plan is intended to address. Caregivers of children with disabilities were described as having to repeatedly provide information already held by government and demonstrate their children's needs without clear criteria. Participants saw this as an example of administrative burden being transferred to families rather than reduced through better coordination within government.

"Caregivers are now burdened with administration that could be streamlined with increased collaboration within MCFD, while caring for their disabled children." ~ Participant, Zoom chat

Regional inconsistency was also raised. Participants described services and decisions varying between communities, with some areas using more flexible, relational approaches and others relying heavily on standardized or "textbook" responses. They wanted stronger consistency in purpose and expectations without losing the flexibility needed to respond to individual children and families.

"As long as school exclusion is accepted as a solution to unmet support needs, we will continue to increase harm to children and families." ~ Participant, Zoom chat

Invest in prevention and the conditions for good practice

Participants questioned whether meaningful transformation can occur without additional investment. They noted that funding has not kept pace with the rising cost of delivering services, forcing organizations to reduce the hours and supports available to families.

"We say this is important, but we do not count it.... We have witnessed all systems cut to meet their budgets, and the first to go are the proactive preventive services." ~ Participant, Zoom chat

Preventive and community-based services were described as particularly vulnerable when systems face financial pressure, even though their loss can result in families needing more intensive support later. Participants cautioned that budget-neutral changes will not remedy decades of underfunding.

"Budget-neutral changes do not remedy decades of underfunding."
~Participant, Zoom chat

They also asked what level of investment was required to transform practice in North Yorkshire and whether changes to structure, policy and organizational culture could have occurred within existing budgets.

Support and trust the workforce

Participants emphasized that relationships depend on continuity. Long-term community and frontline workers can build the trust needed to engage families, understand their circumstances and maintain consistent support. This requires workers to be fairly compensated, supported by their organizations and given the resources and authority to respond.

Participants called for workforce outcomes to be tracked alongside outcomes for children and families. They noted that workers want to do good, relational work, but the activities that make this possible are not always recognized in funding formulas, performance measures or reporting requirements. Some described the moral distress experienced by professionals who understand what children and families need but cannot access the resources to provide it. Participants called for frontline workers to be trusted and empowered to allocate support when it is needed.

Value lived, family and frontline knowledge

Participants called for more frontline workers with lived experience of government care and for families to be treated as equal partners in the circle of care. They emphasized that people with established relationships with children and families often hold knowledge that is essential to safe and informed decision-making. Some suggested that child safety workers should meaningfully consult family support workers and others who know a family before making significant decisions. Participants also highlighted the importance of co-creation, while acknowledging that sharing power and decision-making can create discomfort within established systems.

Strengthen accountability through learning

Participants responded positively to the use of simple, reflective questions to examine whether practice is working and what needs to change. They connected this approach to reflective practice and transformational evaluation. At the same time, they cautioned that reflection can become “window dressing” if questions are not asked consistently, responses are not acted upon and leaders are not accountable for what follows. Participants wanted measurement to capture the strength and quality of practice, not only compliance or service volumes. There was a clear tension between patience and urgency. Some participants recognized that lasting cultural change takes time and requires people to be brought along. Others stressed that children and families have already waited too long and that calls for patience cannot become a reason to delay necessary action.

Hold onto hope while naming frustration

Many participants appreciated Stuart’s directness and his focus on relationships, gathering the circle and creating the conditions for practice to change. Some saw value in government representatives hearing the conversation first-hand. Others were less confident that what was heard would be implemented. Participants described feeling frustrated because there is considerable knowledge about what needs to happen, yet the barriers to acting on that knowledge remain significant. The conversation reflected both deep weariness with the pace of change and a continuing determination to push for something better.

Small group discussions: What participants say is needed now

More than 50 small-group conversations took place during the convening. These provided participants with the chance for some more intimate discussion. The discussion groups were offered two prompts and also an invitation to broaden their discussion if they wanted:

- What shifts in mindsets and practice approaches do we need in B.C. to support the change we aspire to?
- What one or two changes do we need to focus on in the short term to support moving in the right direction?

We received feedback from only a small number of groups, so the themes below do not represent the full breadth of those discussions. They do, however, offer important insights into what some participants were thinking about and wrestling with.

Change must be felt by children, youth and families

Participants expressed frustration that, despite successive reports, policies and commitments, conditions on the ground do not appear to be improving. Some felt that the experiences described in Don't Look Away have become worse in the two years since its release. There was appreciation for Stuart's willingness to name difficult realities directly. At the same time, some participants said the government presentation did not resonate with their experience. They were tired of political framing and wanted greater attention to whether government action is making a tangible difference in the lives of children, youth and families.

"The actual change needs to start now...meaningful change. Not plans and visions." ~Participant, Zoom chat

"Implementation often fails at the operational level before it fails at the policy level." ~Participant, Zoom chat

Look further upstream

Participants questioned whether current approaches pay enough attention to the social determinants of health and the broader economic conditions shaping children's lives. Poverty, inequality and the distribution of wealth were raised as systemic issues that cannot be separated from child and family well-being. Some called for a more ambitious upstream response, including consideration of wealth taxation and other measures aimed at addressing structural inequality. Participants also shared the United Nations Special Rapporteur's [roadmap for eradicating poverty beyond growth](#) as a resource for thinking about these issues.

"Families would not be in crisis if they had access to income support, daycare, etc." ~Participant, Zoom chat

Build relationships around what young people need

Participants spoke about the importance of meeting young people where they are, remaining flexible and taking the time needed to build trust. Trust develops differently for each person, and systems need to make room for that. They also discussed the importance of inviting families, communities and other trusted people into the circle of support. No single service or professional can meet a young person's needs alone. Some questioned whether rules intended to keep children safe can become so rigid that they prevent caregivers and service providers from responding to what a young person needs in the moment. Participants emphasized that safety must include helping young people feel cared for, understood and confident that the adults around them will remain present.

"We cannot just tell families to trust the system; we have to practise in ways that earn trust." ~Participant, Zoom chat

"The system needs to show trustworthiness. Slow down...have time to have the correct caseload.... Let's look at the system and not the people."

~Participant, Zoom chat

"Let social workers do the social work." ~Participant, Zoom chat

"All the systems-oriented work...takes away from the ability to do the relational, co-creative, connected practice...that is needed to see relationship-based outcomes." ~Participant, Zoom chat

Centre lived and frontline knowledge

Participants stressed that people receiving services, families and frontline service providers must be meaningfully involved in designing policy, assessing services and determining whether reforms are working. There was concern that decisions are too often made by people who are distant from the everyday realities of accessing or delivering services. Participants noted that those closest to the system often hold the strongest evidence about its barriers and impacts, yet their knowledge is not consistently sought or valued. They called for involvement that goes beyond consultation and gives people with lived and frontline experience real influence over decisions.

"Perhaps the families can be the voice of change, if we turn the cone upside down rather than have the families at the bottom." ~Participant, Zoom chat

"People that make the decisions are so far separated from the front line. How do we make meaningful change without that?" ~Participant, Zoom chat

Strengthen continuity and accountability

Frequent changes in leadership, political priorities and senior roles were identified as barriers to sustained reform. Participants felt that responsibilities and priorities can shift as people move between positions, weakening continuity, follow-through and accountability. They also expressed concern about the absence of many MCFD colleagues from the convening and spoke about employees within the ministry not feeling adequately supported. Meaningful change requires a workforce that has the capacity, stability and support to carry it forward.

"By the time the vision comes to fruition, the children now will be adults."
~Participant, Zoom chat

Choose collaboration over competition

Participants emphasized that systemic change cannot be achieved by organizations working separately or competing for limited resources. They called for more collaborative ways of working across government, community organizations, families and service systems, grounded in shared responsibility for the well-being of children and youth.

"Collaboration between organizations and groups should be expected and encouraged in order to provide the best support to families." ~Participant,
Zoom chat

"Connection with partners, to be able to keep families together. So how do we do this across all the ministries?" ~Participant, Zoom chat

Carrying the work forward

The convening reinforced that this work is neither finished nor confined to a single report, event or organization. RCY will continue to carry forward what was shared, including participants' calls for greater urgency, stronger accountability and change that can be felt in the daily lives of children, youth and families.

RCY's learning with Sir Stuart Carlton is ongoing. His experience offers practical insights into the leadership, relationships and organizational conditions needed to move from a system centred primarily on risk and protection toward one focused on helping children and families thrive. RCY will continue exploring how these lessons might inform change in B.C., while recognizing the distinct histories, cultures, rights, jurisdictions and realities of this province.

This learning will not be limited to one jurisdiction or one perspective. RCY will look to other jurisdictions with relevant experience and invite them into the circle to share what they have learned, including what has helped turn commitments into meaningful and lasting change for children, youth and families.

RCY will also continue its work with MCFD, including monitoring progress, asking difficult questions and engaging on what is helping or hindering implementation. At the same time, Don't Look Away was clear that responsibility for child well-being cannot rest with MCFD alone. RCY will continue working to bring other ministries more fully into this conversation and to strengthen shared responsibility across government for the conditions that shape children's lives.

As this work continues, RCY will keep asking:

- Are children, youth and families experiencing meaningful change?
- Are families receiving help earlier, before difficulties become crises?
- Are Indigenous rights, laws, jurisdiction and distinctions being respected in practice?
- Are children, youth, families, communities and frontline workers influencing decisions?

- Are ministries working together around the needs of children and families?
- Are the conditions being created for relational, responsive and sustainable practice?
- Is government measuring implementation and impact, not only activity and commitments?

These questions will inform RCY's continued monitoring, advocacy, engagement and public reporting. They will also guide future opportunities to bring people together to examine what is changing, what remains unresolved and what further action is required.

Closing reflection: Still looking, still learning

Two years after Don't Look Away, there has been movement, but the work is far from complete. Plans have been developed, commitments have been made, and important conversations are taking place. The measure of progress, however, is not the number of initiatives underway. It is whether children, youth and families experience timely help, stronger relationships, greater stability and a system that responds to them as whole people.

Still looking means continuing to pay attention when progress is uneven, when commitments do not translate into practice and when children and families continue to experience gaps between services. It means returning to what people with lived experience, families, Indigenous communities, frontline workers and partners have shared and being prepared to ask what their experiences tell us about whether the system is truly changing.

Still learning means remaining open to different ways of leading, working and sharing responsibility. It means learning from Sir Stuart's experience, from Indigenous laws and knowledge, from children, youth and families, and from those working within and alongside the system. It also means bringing other jurisdictions into the circle so that their experiences, insights and lessons can contribute to the work in British Columbia. Learning matters only when it influences decisions and leads to action.

RCY will continue to listen, learn, monitor and speak openly about what it sees. We will continue working with and encouraging stronger involvement across ministries and

creating spaces where learning can be shared and tested. Above all, we will continue to hold children's and youth's well-being as our North Star and to ask whether change is reaching those who need it most.

We are still looking. We are still learning. And we are not looking away.

Appendices

Appendix A: Convening Agenda

Final agenda for Still Looking, Still Learning: Two Years After Don't Look Away.

- **9:30 to 9:50**

Opening, Inclusive space/ASL, Opening prayer with RCY Advisor/Knowledge Holder Red Hummingbird Woman Judy Wilson, RCY Welcome from Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth

- **9:50 to 10:10**

Gov't Remarks: Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives and Mental Health and Addictions, Amna Shah and Minister of Children and Family Development, Jodie Wickens

- **10:10 to 10:30**

RCY Reflections on Progress, Representative Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth

- **10:30 to 11:15**

Conversation with the Representative Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, Hereditary Chief Wedlidi Speck, and Sir Stuart Carlton

- **11:15 to 11:50**

Small group conversations

- **11:50 to 12:00**

Closing with Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth and RCY Advisor/Knowledge Holder Red Hummingbird Woman Judy Wilson

Appendix B: Speaker and Cultural Host Biographies

About Chief Wedlidi Speck

Chief Wedlidi Speck is culturally connected to the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuuchahnulth Mowachath and Northern Vancouver Island Coast Salish E'iksán. As a hereditary chief, he provides cultural leadership through ceremony, teaching and mentorship.

His career spans more than 45 years across the non-profit, private and government sectors. His experience includes organizational leadership, youth and family counselling, corrections supervision, and cultural training and mentorship. He currently serves as Vice-President of People, Culture and Reconciliation at the Royal BC Museum.

Chief Wedlidi Speck is deeply committed to his three children, six grandchildren and clan families.

About Kukpi7 Judy Wilson

Judy (tsiqw xwéxwne – Red Hummingbird) Wilson, Secwépemc, brings 25 years of direct political leadership and a lifetime of knowledge and experience from her family of Kúkpí7s (Chiefs) and Grand Chiefs, and strong women leaders from Secwépemcul'ecw (her home territory).

Her continued leadership is across multiple sectors, including MMIWG2S, land rights, the environment/climate crisis, emergency management, rural economy and especially children and families. She has made numerous interventions internationally to many United Nations Committees and Special Rapporteurs over the years on key First Nations issues.

Judy has many appointments to various First Nations committees on a wide range of issues by the AFN (Assembly of First Nations—Canada), BCAFN (BC Assembly of First Nations) and UBCIC (Union of BC Indian Chiefs).

In addition she is called upon by multiple grassroots agencies and coalitions all across Turtle Island with her work and method of approaching governance, policy and cultural knowledge coming from the heart, rooted in her love of the people, land and water.

Judy currently serves as Knowledge Keeper & Advisor at the Our Children Our Way Society, the Representative for Children & Family (BC), and the National Children's Chief's Commission.

About Minister Jodie Wickens

Jodie Wickens was elected MLA for Coquitlam-Burke Mountain in 2016 and again in 2024. She is the Minister for Children and Family Development. Jodie previously served as the Minister of State for Child Care and Children and Youth with Support Needs.

Before being elected to the Legislative Assembly for a second time, Jodie held various executive leadership roles for non-profit organizations delivering health and social services to children and families. Most recently, she worked as the Director of Programs and Services at SHARE Family & Community Services Society. A mother herself, Jodie and her husband Brian have two children, and have lived in Coquitlam for over 20 years.

About Parliamentary Secretary Amna Shah

Amna Shah was first elected as the MLA for Surrey-City Centre in 2024. Amna is the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives to the Attorney General and Deputy Premier, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Addictions. She also serves as the Deputy Government Whip.

Amna is a past volunteer and Director on the board of the Surrey Food Bank and served as the Outreach Director with the B.C. Government Caucus. She has called Surrey home for nearly 20 years.

About Sir Stuart Carlton

Sir Stuart Carlton was one of RCY's sources of inspiration and wisdom in the preparation of the Don't Look Away systemic review. He provided lived-experience insight into how

to shift a child-serving system from one focused on risk-based protection to one that places thriving and prevention at the centre.

In the UK, he is a nationally recognized systems leader with extensive experience across Local Government and Children's Services. He began his career over 35 years ago in residential childcare and then child protection.

As a statutory Director of Children's Services for nearly a decade, he led his Local Authority to "Outstanding" findings across all areas of assessment in two separate mandatory safeguarding inspections. He has been a Sector Led Improvement partner with the Department for Education for over a decade, providing support and improvement to Local Authorities across the UK. He was a core member of the design team of the national Independent Review of Children's Social Care, leading to significant policy change and influence across the country.

Sir Stuart is known for clear, values-driven, and heart-centred leadership and a consistent ability to inspire change and deliver innovation at scale. He is grounded in a deep understanding of child-serving systems and in his practical experience in transforming them. For this, he was knighted in 2025 for services to children, young people and families.

Appendix C: Participant Discussion Questions

The questions and prompts used to guide the small-group discussions.

- What shifts in mindsets and practice approaches do we need in BC to support the change we aspire to?
- What one or two changes do we need to focus on in the short term to support moving in the right direction?

Appendix D: Themes from the Participant Chat

The chat reflected a clear mix of urgency, frustration and guarded hope. Participants generally supported the direction of the Child and Youth Well-Being Plan but questioned whether it would produce meaningful change in practice. The major themes were:

1. Change must be felt on the ground
2. Move from crisis response to prevention and early support
3. Relational practice requires different system conditions
4. Fragmentation and silos continue to harm families
5. Workforce strain is undermining change
6. Children, youth and families must be equal partners
7. Indigenous rights, relationships and distinctions must be respected
8. Disability and school exclusion require urgent attention
9. Poverty and other upstream conditions cannot remain outside the plan
10. Leadership must enable change, not simply announce it
11. Accountability must examine implementation, not only commitments
12. Rural, remote and regional realities matter

Appendix E: Resources Shared by Participants

A curated list of reports, tools, organizations and other resources shared during the convening.

- B.C. Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan and Outcomes Framework, including the public engagement page: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/childyouthwellbeing/>
- B.C. Basic Income Panel, program and service mapping: <https://bcbasicincomepanel.ca/charts>
- B.C. College of Nurses and Midwives, Registered Nurse Entry-Level Competencies: https://www.bccnm.ca/Documents/competencies_requisite_skills/RN_entry_level/competencies_375.pdf
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-poverty/roadmap-eradicating-poverty-beyond-growth>
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC Office, report on post-secondary education as a public service: <https://bcpolicy.ca/2026/06/09/post-secondary/>
- Eileen Munro's review of child protection in England: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b455ee5274a34770ea939/Munro-Review.pdf>
- Information about Signs of Safety: <https://www.signsofsafety.net/what-is-sofs/?lang=sv>
- Information about Feedback-Informed Treatment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71W0ztYW9v0>

Appendix F: Questions Raised During the Convening

Participants shared questions throughout the convening using the Zoom chat. The questions below have been organized by theme and according to the person or organization best positioned to respond.

Some questions have been lightly edited for clarity and to remove identifying information. Where several comments raised a common issue, they have been summarized rather than presented as direct quotations. Not all questions were answered during the convening. Inclusion in this appendix does not indicate that RCY endorses the premise of a question or is able to respond.

Questions for government

Métis inclusion and cultural safety

Participants raised concerns about the absence of visible Métis representation in the Child and Youth Well-Being Plan and the government presentation. They asked:

“How will mental health service be culturally safe if the Métis people are excluded?”

Related comments raised questions about how government will:

- include Métis voices, experiences and perspectives in the Child and Youth Well-Being Plan
- recognize Métis children, youth and families as distinct from First Nations
- ensure that services are culturally safe and responsive to Métis identities and experiences

Immediate action and accountability

Participants wanted to know what government will do now, alongside its longer-term plans for systems change.

“What can you and the Ministry of Health do and in what time frame to support? We need actual immediate steps.”

Related comments raised questions about:

- the concrete commitments government and the Ministry of Health will make
- the timelines attached to those commitments
- how progress and impact will be measured
- what will change immediately for children, youth and families who need support now
- how government will demonstrate that its plans are leading to meaningful changes in people's lives

Government restructuring and reinvestment

Participants asked how possible changes to the responsibilities of the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the Ministry of Children and Family Development could affect people receiving income and disability assistance.

"To the extent that budgetary efficiencies are achieved, how will those resources be reinvested to improve supports, services and outcomes for youth and families?"

Participants also raised questions about:

- how any restructuring would affect access to income, disability and family supports
- how government would prevent additional disruption or duplication
- whether savings would be reinvested in services for children, youth and families
- how government would monitor the effects of restructuring on the people who rely on these services

Coordination and access to services

Participants described systems that remain difficult for children and families to navigate. Their comments raised questions about:

- how ministries will work together to provide seamless support
- how child well-being will be reflected in the mandates and responsibilities of all ministries
- how the ministries responsible for child welfare and education will work together to address educational well-being and school exclusion
- whether families could access services through a single hub or coordinated point of entry

- how information sharing will improve so families do not have to repeatedly provide information already held by government
- how coordination will improve within ministries as well as across government

Funding and workforce capacity

Participants asked how government will address the effects of stagnant funding, increasing costs and workforce pressures. Questions focused on:

- sustainable funding for preventive and community-based services
- adequate staffing and manageable caseloads
- recruitment, retention and well-being of frontline workers
- stable funding for community agencies, child and youth advocacy centres, kinship caregivers and outreach services
- ensuring frontline practitioners can access resources when children and families need them
- protecting preventive services as service-delivery costs rise

Policy, practice and rights

Participants questioned whether current legislation, policies and institutional approaches create the conditions needed for relational and family-centred practice. Their questions included:

“How does relational practice happen in the context of extreme power through legislation with little oversight?”

Other comments raised questions about:

- whether the Child, Family and Community Service Act and its implementation should be reviewed
- how statutory authority can be balanced with meaningful oversight and accountability
- how updated duty-to-report materials will define and address anti-Indigenous racism
- whether policies are being shaped by the needs and rights of children and families or by institutional fear and risk aversion

- how government will ensure that engagement is genuine and that difficult feedback is heard without defensiveness
- how children, youth and families will influence policy, funding and implementation decisions

Mental health and substance-use services

Participants also asked:

“How can we support families where children/youth are struggling with mental health and/or substance use when the child/youth refuse services?”

This question points to the need for clearer, more coordinated responses from child welfare, health, mental health and substance-use systems.

Questions for RCY

Monitoring implementation and impact

Participants’ comments raised questions about how RCY will monitor whether government commitments are producing changes in everyday practice. In particular, participants wanted to know whether RCY will:

- examine what children, youth and families are experiencing, not only whether plans and policies have been developed
- gather information from frontline practitioners and community organizations
- monitor differences in implementation across regions
- examine the effects of policies in rural, remote and Indigenous communities
- identify duplication, poor coordination and other operational barriers
- track government commitments, timelines and investments
- monitor the effects of government restructuring on services and outcomes
- continue pressing for immediate improvements while longer-term transformation proceeds

The comments reflected a broader concern that implementation can begin to fail at the operational level before those problems are visible through formal policy monitoring.

Continued engagement and follow-up

Participants asked:

“Is there going to be another Zoom meeting like this?”

Related questions included:

- Will RCY continue to convene people to discuss progress and systems change?
- Will unanswered questions be shared with government, Sir Stuart Carlton or other speakers?
- Will participants be informed of any responses received?
- Will there be another opportunity to learn from Sir Stuart and discuss the North Yorkshire experience?

Access to convening materials

Participants asked whether they would receive:

- the convening recording
- presentation slides and other materials
- resources shared by speakers and participants
- the Zoom chat
- the What We Heard document
- a summary of portions of the convening they were unable to attend

Participants were advised that convening videos and a What We Heard document would be shared. The question about whether the full chat would be distributed was not definitively answered during the session.

Questions for Sir Stuart Carlton

Leading change with urgency

Participants were interested in how systems leaders can build relationships and bring people along without losing sight of the urgency experienced by children and families.

“Do you need to have people pressing for rapid change to help urge people to change, when many people are reluctant to change?”

Related questions included:

- How can leaders balance patience and relationship-building with the need for urgent action?
- How can leaders respond to resistance without allowing it to delay necessary change?
- What helps create and sustain momentum across a large and complex system?

Relational practice and institutional power

Participants asked how relational practice can be sustained within a statutory child protection system that holds significant authority over children and families.

“How does relational practice happen in the context of extreme power through legislation with little oversight?”

Related questions focused on:

- moving from surveillance, compliance and risk aversion toward relational practice
- creating organizational structures that support professional judgment and relationships
- ensuring relational practice does not depend solely on the commitment of individual workers
- strengthening accountability while allowing practitioners to work creatively and responsively

Resourcing transformation

Participants wanted to better understand the financial and organizational conditions that supported transformation in North Yorkshire.

“I am curious about the degree of funding increase that was required for the work to change the conditions for practice, structure, policy and culture.”

“Were you able to do it within the current budget or were there specific government investments required?”

Related questions included:

- What new investments were required?
- Which investments had the greatest effect?

- What changes were achieved by using existing resources differently?
- How were resources shifted toward earlier and more relational support?

Resources and further learning

Participants asked:

“Does the guest speaker have resources we can access?”

There was interest in resources related to:

- the North Yorkshire transformation
- leadership and organizational change
- evaluation and measurement
- relational approaches to child welfare
- Signs of Safety

Questions for government, RCY and system leaders

Some questions applied to several organizations and could not reasonably be assigned to only one respondent.

Translating plans into practice

Taken together, participants’ comments raised broader questions about:

- why changes described in plans and reports are not consistently experienced on the ground
- what would demonstrate that the Child and Youth Well-Being Plan is changing practice
- how implementation will be measured from the perspectives of children, families and frontline workers
- what can be changed immediately while longer-term transformation continues

Workforce conditions

Participants asked how systems will:

- measure and improve worker well-being and retention
- reduce administrative and compliance burdens
- provide workers with more time to build relationships
- connect senior decision-makers more closely with frontline realities
- support professional judgment, creativity and discretion
- ensure workforce pressures do not undermine the quality or continuity of services

Family voice and shared decision-making

Participants questioned whether children, youth and families are genuinely influencing decisions.

“Have we listened to what would make it better?”

Related comments raised questions about:

- how families will be treated as equal partners in their circles of care
- how engagement findings will influence policies, funding and implementation
- how organizations will demonstrate that participants’ contributions have been heard and acted upon
- how children and young people will be meaningfully involved in assessing whether change is working

Suggestions for future learning

Participants also offered suggestions for future learning and engagement:

- provide another opportunity to learn from Sir Stuart Carlton
- share resources about the North Yorkshire transformation and Signs of Safety
- invite Sarah Blaffer Hrdy to speak at a future event
- continue convening participants to discuss implementation, progress and the changes being experienced by children, youth and families

Appendix G: Participation Snapshot

97 distinct organizations or organizational affiliations were registered, representing the 628 registrants.

Organizations represented

A

- A Way Home Canada
- A Way Home Kamloops Society
- Access to Justice BC
- ACT Autism Community Training Society
- ADAPS Youth and Family Services
- ADHD Coaching and Consulting Victoria
- AIDP Provincial Office
- Arc Programs
- Arc Programs/Interior Community Services
- Archway Society
- ARYS, the At-Risk Youth Study
- AutismBC
- Axis Family Resources Ltd.
- Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services

B

- Back2Basiks Therapeutic Recreation
- BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
- BC Association of Social Workers
- BC Centre on Substance Use
- BC Children's Hospital
- BC Children's Hospital and Research Institute, University of British Columbia
- BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness
- BC College of Social Workers
- BC Complex Kids
- BC Coroners Service
- BC Disability Collaborative
- BC Foster Parent Association

- BC Government and Service Employees' Union

BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres Society

- BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner
- BC Office of the Ombudsperson
- BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
- BC Public Service
- BC Public Service Agency
- BC Society of Transition Houses
- BeConnected Support Services
- Belonging Network
- Big Bear Child & Youth Advocacy Centre

C

- Cameray Child and Family Services
- Campbell River Family Services Society
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Shuswap-Revelstoke Branch
- Capilano University
- Caring Families Society
- Carrier Sekani Family Services
- Ceann Damh Consulting Ltd.
- Centre for Response-Based Practice
- Centre of Excellence for Women's Health
- Child and Youth Advocacy Centre of Kelowna
- Chilliwack Community Services
- CISUR/First Nations Health Authority
- City of Mission
- Clements Centre Society
- Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
- Coastal Mountain Child & Youth Services Ltd.
- Community Action Initiative
- Community Living BC
- Community Options for Children and Families
- Comox Valley Child Development Association
- Compassionate Systems BC
- Count Your Assets Caring and Learning
- Court Services Branch

- Covenant House Vancouver
- CP Mediation
- CWAVS
- CYMHSU Community of Practice

D

- Daniel Martin Consulting and Training Inc./HEERO
- Dawson Creek Aboriginal Family Resources Society
- Day One Treatment Society
- Directions Youth Services
- District of Kitimat
- District of Tumbler Ridge
- Down Syndrome Resource Foundation

E

- Eagle Nest Community and Aboriginal Services
- Encompass Early Learning
- Ending Violence Association of BC

F

- Fair Autism & Disability Funding BC
- FAIR Support Social Cooperative
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- Family Support Institute of BC
- Federation of Community Social Services of BC
- First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society
- First Nations Education Steering Committee
- First Nations Health Authority
- First Nations Summit
- FNEDC
- Foundry Vancouver Granville
- Fraser Health
- Fraser Health HEAL Clinic
- Fraser Valley Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society

G–H

- Gender Equity Office
- Gitxsan Child & Family Services Society
- Greentree Community Inclusion Programs Inc.

- Haida Gwaii Society for Community Peace
- Haven Family Services
- Holding Space
- Human Early Learning Partnership

I–K

- ICYMH
- Inclusion BC
- Inspire Kids FASD Support Society
- Interior Community Services
- Interior Health
- Island Métis Family & Community Services Society
- Justice Services Branch
- Karis Support Society
- Kitasoo Xai'xais Child & Family
- Kitasoo Xai'xais First Nation
- Kootenay Boundary Community Services Cooperative

L–M

- Langley Community Services Society
- Learn. Develop. Succeed.
- Leo Street Youth and Family Services Society
- Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Community Services
- McCreary Centre Society
- McGill University
- Métis Nation British Columbia
- Ministry of Attorney General
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Ministry of Citizens' Services
- Ministry of Education and Child Care
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Public Safety
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Moms Stop the Harm
- Mount Pleasant Family Centre
- Mount Saint Vincent University

N

- Nanaimo Child Development Centre
- Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia
- Neskonlith Education Centre
- Neskonlith Indian Band
- Nlha'7kapmx Child and Family Services Society
- NONA Child Development Centre
- Northern Rockies Child Development Association
- Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society

O

- Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, Alberta
- Office of the Provincial Health Officer
- Okanagan Nation Alliance
- OneSky Community Resources
- Options Community Services Society
- Our Children Our Way Secretariat

P–Q

- Pacific Community Resources Society
- Parent Support Services Society of BC
- Parents Legal Centre
- PEI Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
- PLEA Community Services
- Powell River Child Youth and Family Services Society
- Prince George Native Friendship Centre
- Providence Health
- Provincial Health Services Authority
- Public Guardian and Trustee of BC
- Quesnel Child Development Centre

R–S

- Reach Child and Youth Development Society
- Representative for Children and Youth
- River Counseling
- Safe Kids & Youth Coordinated Response
- SAJE
- Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society
- Secwepemc Child and Family Services Agency

- Simon Fraser University
- Smithers/Hazelton Parents Legal Centre
- Society for Children & Youth of BC
- Sources Community Resources Society
- Squamish Nation
- St. Leonard's Youth and Family Services Society
- Starbright Children's Development Centre Association
- Still Interpreting
- Strong Circle Leadership & Governance Society
- Sunshine Coast Community Services Society
- Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services

T

- Tamitik Status of Women
- Taproot Community Support Services
- Terrace Child Development Centre
- The Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
- The KOOP
- The Victoria Youth Empowerment Society
- Thomas Robinson Consulting Ltd.
- Threshold Housing Society
- Thrive Social Services Society
- Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation
- Trail FAIR Society
- Treehouse Advocacy Centre Society Vancouver
- Tsow-Tun Le Lum

U-Y

- Union of BC Indian Chiefs
- University of British Columbia
- University of the Fraser Valley
- Usma Nuu-chah-nulth Family and Child Services
- Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society
- Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Society
- Vancouver Child and Family Services Society
- Vancouver Community College

- Vela Canada
- Victoria Life Coach
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre
- Village of Alert Bay
- Village of Lumby
- Village of Masset
- Westcoast Community Resources Society
- YWCA BC Crabtree Corner Community

Appendix H: Accessibility and Cultural Supports

Accessibility and care were considered throughout the planning and delivery of the convening. American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation was available for the full event, and participants received accessibility information at the beginning of the session.

Accessible PDF and PowerPoint versions of the presentation materials were shared in advance, allowing participants to review the content ahead of time and use their preferred assistive technology. The materials were designed to support screen-reader access, logical reading order and clear visual presentation.

Recognizing that the convening addressed difficult and potentially distressing issues, care and cultural support were available throughout the session. Cultural support workers from [Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society](#) were present to support participants who needed connection, grounding or care. Participants were reminded that they could step away from the conversation at any time and return when they felt ready.

Participants were also provided with information about confidential emotional support available beyond the convening:

- **Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868, or text **CONNECT** to 686868. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to people in Canada ages five to 29.
- **KUU-US Crisis Line:** 1-800-588-8717. Available to support Indigenous people in B.C. 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Métis Crisis Line:** 1-833-638-4722. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Mental Health Support Line:** 310-6789, with no area code required. Connects callers with their local B.C. crisis line 24 hours a day.
- **National Indian Residential School Crisis Line:** 1-866-925-4419. Provides 24-hour support to former Indian Residential School students and their families.

Appendix I: Presentation Materials

The following slide decks were used during the We Are Not Looking Away: Still Looking, Still Learning convening held on July 16, 2026. They are included to provide a record of the information and perspectives presented during the event.

- [Representative for Children and Youth Presentation](#)
- [Ministry of Children and Family Development Presentation](#)

The decks are reproduced as presented. The inclusion of the Ministry's materials does not indicate RCY's agreement with or endorsement of the information or perspectives they contain.

Appendix J: Related RCY Reports and Resources

The reports and resources below provide additional context for the issues discussed during the convening and document RCY's ongoing efforts to monitor progress, support shared learning and press for meaningful change.

Together, these materials trace the work from the release of *Don't Look Away* and *No Time to Wait* through the convenings, public reporting and monitoring that have followed. They also provide further information about the evidence, experiences and recommendations that continue to guide RCY's work.

- **Don't Look Away: How one boy's story has the power to shift a system of care for children and youth.**

RCY's 2024 systemic review of the conditions affecting the well-being of children and youth in British Columbia and the changes required across government and the broader system.

- Access [Don't Look Away](#)

- **No Time to Wait: Recommendations for action**

The companion report to *Don't Look Away*, setting out immediate actions to improve the lives of children, youth and families while longer-term transformation is underway.

- Access [No Time to Wait Part 1](#)
- Access [No Time to Wait Part 2](#)

- **Don't Look Away: Two Years Later**

RCY's assessment of progress two years after the release of *Don't Look Away*, including areas where movement has occurred and where significant gaps remain between commitments, implementation and the experiences of children, youth and families.

- Access the [monitoring report](#)
- Access the [Two Year Anniversary of Don't Look Away Convening video](#)

- **We Are Not Looking Away convening videos**

Related What We Heard reports, presentations, recordings and background materials from RCY's ongoing series of convenings focused on child well-being, violence, early help and family support, and systemic change.

- Access the [One Year Anniversary of Don't Look Away Convening video](#)
- Access the [We Are Not Looking Away Family and Intimate Partner Violence convening](#) video, and the [convening summary](#)
- Access the [We Are Not Looking Away Family Support and Early Help convening](#) video, and the [convening summary](#)

All links were current at the time of publication. Additional reports, updates and resources are available through the [Representative for Children and Youth website](#).