

News Release

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NATIONAL ADVOCATES TAKE MESSAGE TO THE UN THAT CANADA MUST DO BETTER TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

TORONTO, February 2, 2012 - A national plan is urgently needed to address the single most important systemic human rights issue in the country – the health, education and safety of Aboriginal children and youth.

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) is taking that message to Geneva. On Monday, February 6, 2012, the Council will table a special report on Aboriginal Children – Canada Must Do Better: Today and Tomorrow – at the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Irwin Elman, Ontario's Child Advocate, who will be attending the session on behalf of the CCCYA, said: "It is of particular concern that Canada does not have a monitoring mechanism that is detailed at the national level and can report with confidence on challenges and improvements to the rights and life circumstances of Aboriginal children."

The CCCYA's report documents how Aboriginal children in Canada are disproportionately represented in the youth justice and child welfare systems. Not only do they have poorer health status, they lag significantly in educational outcomes, and they are too often the victims of sexual exploitation and violence. Their rates of death and injury are disproportionately high.

"There are significant deep-seated gaps between Aboriginal children in Canada and their non-Aboriginal peers," said CCCYA president Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. "We believe that not only is this Canada's most important systemic human rights issue, it is this country's most neglected issue. Meeting our responsibilities to all children requires a clear, outcomes-directed, child-centered national plan."

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The CCCYA is an alliance of provincially/territorially appointed children's advocates from 10 Canadian provinces and territories. Although their mandates differ according to the legislation that establishes each office, they share a common commitment to further the voice, rights and dignity of children, especially vulnerable children. The council's report calls for a Canada-wide plan that will measure and report on progress so that all Canadians and the Council would be able to track progress, and to bring the voices of Aboriginal children and youth to the fore.

The Council is also renewing its call for a national Children's Commissioner. The CCCYA joins other national and international organizations and leaders that have repeatedly called for creation of an independent statutory officer of the Parliament of Canada. The CCCYA strongly believes that effective oversight would centralize the focus and accountability necessary to improve the living conditions and well-being of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and youth in Canada.

The tabling of the council's Special Report at the CRC reaffirms the CCCYA's shared commitment to ensuring that the international community continues to press Canada on its national children's human rights agenda.

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The CCCYA's report can be viewed at:

http://www.rcybc.ca/Images/PDFs/Reports/CCCYA_UN_Report-FINAL%20oct%2027.pdf

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