

**It's a Crime: An Act Local - Think Global Conference on the
Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth**

April 30 - May 1, 1999
Vancouver, BC, Canada

***Presented by: Alliance for the Rights of Children - ARC
Formerly: Vancouver Coalition for Children and Youth***

Acknowledgements

Without the help of the following organizing committee members, this conference would not have been possible:

- Renata Aebi, (Conference Chair) Vancouver Coalition for Children and Youth
- Anne Carten, V/RHB
- Shana Chetner, ASU
- Sandy Cooke, Covenant House
- Tracey Corbet, Kid Friendly! BC
- Tia Eagles-Claw, Boys R Us
- Brian Evoy, MCF
- Laurie Hearty, MRMI
- Andrea Little, Community Schools
- Cheryl MacKinnon, Stolen Innocence
- Sophie Mas, MAG/PPU
- Monica Stokl, V/RHB
- Wendy Wood, The Gathering Place

Editor: Donna Robertson, Research Coordinator, FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children.

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The Program

Friday, April 30, 1999

The Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel Ballroom
1088 Burrard Street, Vancouver, BC

6:00 to 7:00 REGISTRATION, WELCOME, RECEPTION

7:00 to 9:00 OPENING ADDRESS

- **Rick Antonson** President and CEO of Tourism Vancouver

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- **Dr. Jennifer Wade** International Human Rights Advocate
- **Cherry Kingsley** Co-Chair, International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth

PERFORMANCE PRESENTATION

- **PIE Youth Theatre Company**

Saturday, May 1, 1999

St. Paul's Hospital Conference Centre
1081 Burrard Street, Vancouver, BC

8:30 to 9:00 REGISTRATION FOR CONFERENCE & WORKSHOPS

9:00 to 11:30 OPENING ADDRESS

- **Ujjal Dosanjh** Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Human Rights, and Immigration

MORNING PANEL

- **Dr. Jacquelyn Nelson** Senior Policy Analyst with the Ministry of Attorney General and Chair of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution
- **Dr. Yasmin Jiwani** Executive Coordinator, FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children
- **Laura Park** Ph.D. (Can.) Carleton University, Psychology Department
- **Brent Parfitt** Deputy Ombudsman, Province of BC

QUESTION PERIOD

FILM PRESENTATION

- **Lori Roth** Filmmaker

11:30 to 1:30 LUNCHEON ADDRESS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- **Honourable Hedy Fry** Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women)
- **Audrey Lundquist** Hereditary Chief, Elder and Lawyer

1:30 to 2:30 AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

2:45 to 4:30 AFTERNOON PANEL: LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

- **Diane Sowden** Director, Children of the Street Society
- **Detective Noreen Waters** CLEU
- **Tia Eagles-Claw** Boys R Us
- **Cheryl MacKinnon** Coordinator, Stolen Innocence
- **Sandy Cunningham** Crown Counsel for the Provincial Prostitution Unit
- **Michael Cook** Urban Native Youth

4:15 CLOSING ADDRESS

- **Sandy Cooke** Covenant House
- **Renata Aebi** Vancouver Coalition for Children and Youth

[About the Conference](#)

Renata Aebi

The Vancouver Coalition for Children and Youth and the Vancouver Alliance Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

Last fall over 100 people gathered at Templeton High School to talk about the increase in the sexual exploitation of children and youth in Vancouver communities. During this event, schoolteachers, counsellors, health professionals, police, service providers, youth, and others shared their frustrations and concerns over the abuse of children and youth in their schools and communities. School-youth and family workers told us how recruitment of children has dropped to as low as grade four. Others talked about the connection between racism and sexual exploitation and the role that poverty plays. Still others talked about their frustration with a lack of detox, shelters, treatment and supports for children and youth. They said that while this issue was increasing, in part due to the increase in organized crime, resources were being cut. They told us that they had gathered to talk about this issue before and wanted to see action. This conference was one step toward taking collective action within Vancouver.

The *Georgia Straight* newspaper told many of us what we had already suspected. Vancouver is known on the Internet as a destination of choice for pedophiles. Because of weak laws and enforcement practices, because of a lack of public interest, because of a lack of prevention and intervention programs for children and youth, because our most vulnerable children and youth need better than what our government systems offer, because children are often seen as property, for all these reasons and more, children and youth are sexually abused. Of course we also home-grow pedophiles in Canada, and many of our citizens leave our shores to access children and youth around the world who are perhaps more vulnerable due to severe poverty and a lack of human rights.

Sexually exploited children and youth will tell you that the men who abuse them come from all walks of life. Some are fathers with car seats in their automobiles, others are lawyers, priests, schoolteachers, labourers, politicians, and sports figures. They abuse children because it is easy, because to them these children and youth are objects for their gratification, because they fool themselves into thinking that sex with children is mutual, because they get off on the power of it, because they are rapists. Because they can.

Many of you, I know, are closely following the BC Court of Appeal ruling on the issue of simple possession of pornography. The challenge for any society that seeks to protect freedom of expression is to equally protect others from the potential harm that one person or group's expression might bring. Of course, in Canada, Article One of the Charter states that one person's right to freedom of expression could be denied if such expression were harmful to the community. Perhaps we need to examine and amend the law to be more specific, but surely we should be able to agree that when someone's expression entails the abuse of children, that this should be sufficient to form the opinion that the potential for

harm exists. The Internet, which has become a very efficient tool for pedophiles to recruit children for pornography and prostitution, has changed the nature of the public/private paradigm. How can we say that we are merely expressing our fantasies in private when we are simultaneously downloading and sending images from our private homes out into the public arena. Our laws and our interpretation of law needs to reflect a better understanding of how rapidly technology is changing our society.

While local efforts in Vancouver have existed and do exist, there is no structure for Vancouver to come together collectively. The newly formed *Vancouver Alliance Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth* seeks to bring together organizations and individuals who are interested in taking action on this issue for Vancouver. To do this, the Alliance sees itself as supporting local efforts and working, in particular with youth, to identify key strategies for change. Vancouver needs a collective voice on the issue. We also need to become linked to provincial, national and international initiatives.

There are many committed individuals working to eliminate the sexual exploitation of children and youth. Some of the most committed are people who know first hand the difficulties facing children and youth who are trapped by poverty, coercion, violence or drugs. I believe that we will not be successful in eliminating the abuse of children and youth until we reach out to the broader community with a united voice. I hope you will join us.

What some of you may not know is that this conference was envisioned, developed and fund-raised in only four-and-a-half months. This conference could not have been achieved without the hard work and efforts of the organizing committee, as well as the generous donations by our sponsors: Platypus Creative Group, Providence Health Care, The *Stolen Innocence* Campaign, Covenant House Vancouver, the Ministry of Attorney General, the Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration, the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel, the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, the Justice Institute of BC, the City of Vancouver, the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, Teahouse and Seasons in the Park, McDonald's Restaurants, and HMV Canada.

I would also like to acknowledge our keynote, panel and workshop presenters and volunteers and in particular, to our moderator, Maria LeRose, for keeping us on track throughout the conference. Thanks also to the media for their interest in reporting the story to the broader community and assisting us in our goal of informing people of the need for a Vancouver plan for action.

Keynote Speech

Jennifer Wade

International Human Rights Advocate

I am pleased and honoured to be asked to speak here today as an Amnesty International member, a former Elizabeth Fry board member, and a justice advocate who has worked on many issues across the country.

The topic we are dealing with here today - the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth - is not a very pleasant one; indeed it is a very sad and tragic topic that deals with **the destruction of millions of lives**. (Note I do not call it the loss of childhood but the destruction of life.) Once abused sexually as a child, it is almost impossible for any life to be lived normally because in the process of being abused, the joy of a child and a child's natural trust and spontaneity is killed. Sexual abuse has been called the destruction of the soul, and I think that is apt terminology. Such a thing happening to children is a cataclysmic event in their lives, an event that more often than not leads to an arrest of social development and a downward spiral into a feeling of worthlessness, shame, drugs, depression, and even self mutilation. The hospitals, prisons, and psychiatric institutions of our land all contain such victims.

Nothing can more successfully bring about a sense of life having no purpose or meaning and a sense of permanent depression for a child than sexual exploitation. When we find that suicide among children between the ages of 9 and 14 has increased by more than 1000% since the mid 1950s, we have to ask what is causing children to feel life is purposeless and scary. Then we must ask how many of these children were sexually abused. About 80% of women prisoners, for example, have as children been sexually abused and often by someone whom they were supposed to have trusted. I have a file of letters from some of these women saying that hate and anger and shame burn in them permanently - particularly when the perpetrators of the crimes have not as yet been apprehended.

It is true that the topic is coming out more into the open, but I am not sure whether that is a good or a bad thing. My fear is that free talk about a subject can tend to make it trendy and therefore, somewhat legitimate. Unfortunately all too often the unspeakable and the unthinkable have a way of being made legitimate once a topic is brought into the open and a bit of time has passed, and once politics have been worked through. I worry greatly when we hear terminology such as "sexual orientation" being used loosely to mean everything and anything, and then we begin to hear matter-of-fact discussions about "inter-generational" sex. I say where children are concerned, we must call things as they are: perversion and barbarism are perversion and barbarism. Let's not kid ourselves into thinking otherwise.

A firm and moral voice for the protection of the most vulnerable members of our society, our children, must be registered clearly and loudly - as it was by the public against the Justice Shaw ruling on pornographic material.

On the topic of this ruling, it is by strange but fitting coincidence that this conference is being held at the end of this week when Canadians from coast-to-coast have been astounded by what has been said at the John Robin Sharpe trial when Judge Mary Southin said that we cannot moralize about children in Brazil having to sell their bodies to exist. In other words, saying it is all right for the most desperate of children to satisfy the perversions of pedophiles because they have to do so? Such statements and the rulings by other judges in recent years have caused me to share the concern of many Canadians that appointed - not elected - judges who are re-writing the laws of our land according to the Constitution and the Charter when laws should be made or changed as necessary only in Parliament by the will of the people. We cannot and must not afford to see society fall apart before our eyes as judges and lawyers get tied up in knots with the business of rights and privacy and start rewriting the rules that threaten our society.

I shall return to talking about the local scene, but first I want to have a quick look at the international scene.

For a long time, Amnesty International has heard stories of trafficking in children, especially in South America, Africa, and South East Asia. Indeed, even religious rites exist for children to serve the sexual needs of their elders in, for example, India and Nepal. Tolerant as we try to be, we must ask how far we are going to be tolerant about such intolerable practices. Excellent films like *Salaam Bombay* have portrayed the terrible sadness of children being sold to and then trained for the sex trade. Thousands of such young women and girls and boys, some as young as five years old, are constantly being bought and sold in much the same manner as is depicted in this film. Indeed, the sex slave trade has been compared to the drug trade in terms of profitability and its terrible impact on millions of small lives.

Particularly vulnerable have been the very poor of the world and the refugees where no home village system exists to protect them. Thousands of young refugee women from Burma fleeing from the horrors of their own country across borders into India, Bangladesh or Thailand have told terrible tales of the misery and horror of sexual exploitation.

- Similar stories are being told of young girls in Nepal being sold to outsiders; human rights activists report some villages have no girls between the ages of 9 and 16.
- There have also been reports of 60 to 80 young women and children being shipped out of Bangladesh every day for the sex trade in India, Pakistan and the Middle East.
- In Cambodia, many a child from a very poor family has been sold into the sex trade for less than \$50. Fifty dollars! All too often these children are used to service the strange, perverted appetites of tourists from the West and from places like Brunei, the countries of the Middle East, and Japan.

- And the world over, the burgeoning sex trade with children is well known in places like Thailand where children are often smuggled in from Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Burma, or Yunnan Province in China.

Human rights people concerned about the problem have estimated that there are more than 200,000 children working as prostitutes in Thailand. The latest UN figures say that up to **one million children** work as prostitutes in the Far East. What terror, what fear in each little life! And in South America, one third of Brazil's children are growing up on the streets of Brazil, and ironically here, Brazil is potentially a rich country.

As for what is being done apart from the legislation put forward in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* - to which almost all of these South East Asian countries are signatories - there was a *World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1996. It was attended by approximately 125 countries which came together to discuss and share information on the sexual exploitation of children, especially on such matters as forced prostitution where children submitted to misery just to eat to stay alive. In that year, Canada introduced its "anti-travelling johns" legislation since a number of the perpetrators of crimes against children in Asia were Canadian men actually paying money to go on underage sex tours. It is puzzling and hard to absorb how some of these men could be fathers and grandfathers themselves, and it is fearfully disturbing to think that some of these people are people whom we probably know.

It is true that Lloyd Axworthy has made statements since the *Congress* in Sweden about the exploitation of children being, in his words, "the most disturbing of all abuses involving children" and being a "heinous threat to our children," but by and large, Canada has done very little to put teeth into lofty sounding phrases, and police officers have admitted that they are not focussing on the international issue.

Perhaps they are not focussing on the international issue, terrible as it is, because the issue exists here at home more than most of us possibly realize. More and more in recent years we have been learning that one does not need to go far afield to hear of the sexual exploitation of children and youth. It is a very, very serious problem right here in Vancouver. In March 1997, no less a paper than the *Christian Science Monitor* highlighted the flourishing sex trade in children right here in Vancouver, referring to the city as "a pedophile's paradise," a place known for its "notorious sex trade," and saying that Vancouver has gained an international reputation "as a city where it is easy to find a child for sex."

Child advocates in the city put the numbers of such children in the hundreds and say that 25% of the sex trade workers start at age 14 or younger. Chaplain Al Mayall of the Union Gospel Mission, commenting on this sex trade "that creeps into and destroys the lives of young people," scoffs at the word "consenting," saying, "The sex trade is about exploitation, not mutual consent." These people, he says, are victims who "pay dearly with their lives."

Although there has been an attempt since 1997 to emphasize the arresting of the sex customers rather than the juveniles involved, there have been very few arrests to date, and the problem continues to escalate. Recently, adding to the sordidness of the story, the disappearance of young women in Vancouver has also increased (21 since 1995). Responsible police officials with whom I spoke this week have even said they would not be surprised if one or more serial killer existed. This is very chilling.

In January of this year, the *Vancouver Courier* published an article entitled "Coming on to our Children" (January 31, 1999). For many, it was no doubt a wake-up call first of all to read that this was happening in their neighbourhoods, and secondly, to find out what people working in the court systems have known for a long time: that many of the people involved were churchmen, lawyers, businessmen, and possibly neighbours whom they probably know. They would also perhaps be surprised to read that children as young as 12 were being lured into the sex trade in such places as upscale shopping malls and schoolyards. The article also made another important point. It indicated that once children are drawn into a grotesque, deviant subculture with a language and, yes, even a sense of community of its own, it becomes increasingly difficult to escape.

However, the sex trade in children is not a recent happening in Vancouver. While doing some research for this presentation, I came across the affidavit of a Cree lawyer named Renate Andres-Auger who filed an affidavit in April 1994 naming prominent legal personalities and the BC Law Society for destroying her legal practice and libelling and slandering her (I have a copy of that affidavit listing prominent plaintiffs with me). Renate Auger alleged this happened partly because of her knowledge of pedophile rings operating out of the Vancouver Club and out of resorts in Whistler. In a very bizarre scene as it was described in the papers I discovered, Ms. Auger and her lawyer, Jack Cram, were first not listened to in the court, and then were handcuffed and dragged out of the courtroom to a jail cell. When Jack Cram eventually did speak, he put before the judge some of his allegations involving cover-ups by the head officers of the Law Society and the judiciary to aid and abet pedophiles and drug dealers. When he insisted on giving more details on radio, Jack Cram was met by 10 policemen upon his return from a radio station. He was then put into an ambulance and taken to the psychiatric ward of Vancouver General Hospital. He believes he was injected again and again with mind disorienting drugs.

The Cram/Andres-Auger story, to this day, remains a very strange and fearful tale of alleged corruption and pedophilia in high places. It is also a story which has never yet been completely told. Perhaps if it were, along with a few other strange stories, we as Canadians would have little reason to gasp at the exposure of pedophile rings in Belgium operating in high places two years ago. The matter of cover-ups possibly existing for those in high places in Canada is becoming more and more credible as more and more people speak out.

But the sex trade in children, especially young Native children, goes back much further than the time of Renate Andres-Auger. This became a very real fact to me, unthinkable as it was, last June 12 to 14 when I happened to attend a Tribunal arranged by a UN affiliate

group here in Vancouver to hear testimonies of Native people who had attended the church-run residential schools. Although I have been associated with Amnesty International since its beginnings in 1961, I must admit that what I heard at that Tribunal was horribly disturbing and shattering. I am still haunted by the disturbing accounts given of little children, aged 5 and 6, being taken from their parents and grandparents by police who took them in gunboats to schools, some of them never to see their homes or their villages again. Not only were tales recounted of unfathomable cruelty and torture to little children dragged away from their homes and put under the legal guardianship of church-run schools, but even worse were the accounts given of pedophile groups consisting of church men and women administering what were called "white vitamins" to little children of 9 and 10 who were taken one by one to the so-called infirmary at night. Few of them recalled what happened next except that when they came to, they often saw blood on a sheet and remembered experiencing great pain. Harriet Nahanee, a Native elder, has given the police her story of hearing a young child called Maisie Williams crying on Christmas Eve for her mother after being with one of the alleged pedophiles at the Port Alberni School. And then Ms. Nahanee testified that this child was pushed down the basement steps to where Harriet Nahanee was herself hiding. This young girl is reported by Ms. Nahanee to have died, and this is confirmed in a copy of the school records I have seen. Ms. Nahanee herself alleges she was molested time and time again by the principal of the school, a Rev. Caldwell, who has since died. And the police therefore claim they can take no action on her story. Other women at the Tribunal testified to "being cleaned up" on a Saturday night and being taken often by Native people themselves to clients. One person mentioned the Vancouver Club.

At this same Tribunal, a Native man spoke about being taken home by a teacher at Christmas and then being given alcohol before being sexually molested. The names of many Reverends, Sisters, Fathers, and Brothers were given as story after story of terrifying sexual exploitation and cruelty was told. To run away was to risk merciless beatings with electrical wires and horse harnesses - perhaps even death in the barns, one man said. All of this is on record. How prevalent such cases were, one can only guess. Certainly everyone here tonight should think carefully upon the figures given in the *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginals* that **125,000 children went into those schools and 50,000 never came out**. We can only guess what those children, both boys and girls, were subjected to. Undoubtedly, only part of the anguish was sexual exploitation, but it was a very horrible part that has remained an enduring nightmare for many of the victims. Certainly, as one listened amid the sobbing and the anguish at that Tribunal to stories being told of all kinds of sexual predators and perverts, one realized that these schools, often in remote places with inaccessible transportation, must have been havens for sexual perverts and pedophiles.

But it is not Native children in residential schools across the land who alone suffered such abuse. We are finding out as people dare to come forward that reform schools and schools for deaf and blind children were also such havens for pedophiles. Unfortunately, class action suits to get to the real story of sexual exploitation in all these places have been few and far between, and in many instances, positively discouraged. One man, a Mr. Plint at the Port Alberni School, was charged in a class action suit, but this man, it would

seem, was but a "fall guy." There were many Mr. Plints out there. How can we today possibly think our society could come out of such cruelty and misery unscathed? Of course there is a price to pay in terms of broken lives and on-going misery and hopelessness. Even worse, those who were sexually abused as children confessed with anguish and even disbelief at that Tribunal to being abusers themselves now, often of their own children. People, of course, tend to pass on what they themselves know.

No, we do not need to go far from home to know the underbelly of that "niceness" we so often associate with Canadians. It is perhaps that very niceness which allows horrific things to go on without questioning, things like pedophile rings. More and more I see complacency and a degree of self-satisfaction as real problems in our midst, a hotbed for allowing some pretty sinister things to take place. There are instances of those who have tried to tell the truth being silenced in one way or another, particularly when the truth pertains to those in positions of power. When complaints have been made, authorities have said it is not in the public interest to investigate. And by and large, ordinary people do not seem concerned enough to ask the necessary questions. Moreover, to think the unthinkable is often more than what most want to do. Complacency is certainly allowing things to happen, but at this point, I want to say something briefly about where these children are coming from on our own streets.

Many have gone through frightening, irresponsible parenting with the government trying to prop up totally dysfunctional families. Many have gone through foster care that has been failing for a long time and is continuing to fail right, left, and centre around us so that even popular magazines like *Reader's Digest* are now writing about it - and I speak as a former foster parent myself. And then there are those who have gone through homes - many of them relatively affluent homes - where parents lack both the convictions and/or the courage of their convictions. Lots of nagging might take place, but all too often weakness of character and sometimes even fear in the parents of their own children at very young ages fails to establish boundaries and ultimately real respect. Children must have a parent or parents or a guardian in whom they can believe and with whom they can find their way, someone who shows a degree of determination, firmness and character; that is, a degree of real caring. And yes, children actually seem to test for this.

Unfortunately, much popular psychology and many trends in parenting today fortify weak parenting, and in so doing undermine the confidence of children in their seniors, and make them look elsewhere, often on the streets, for solace or for the like-minded. After that, often great damage gets done before they see that the streets are mean and hardly places of refuge. The way back from the horrors of drugs and the selling of their bodies is much harder than the way out to the streets, and more often than not, the damage done is permanent before help is sought, if indeed there is help there.

I also want to say something briefly about foster care since a high percentage of those who are exploited have at one time or another, been in foster care. For 5 years, I worked hard to try to get our government to look at alternatives to what all too often constitutes foster care today. Let me briefly describe what going into care with all its attendant trauma is all about. A child is apprehended and put into care often too late after all else

has failed - because judges and social workers often require evidence for repeated failures of parenting. Let's say the child is then removed. However in no time at all, attempts are made to reunite the child with the biological family - mainly because of a lack of other options. Here I quote from *The New England Journal of Medicine* (December 6, 1990), "Poor coordination of services and lack of resources keep children rotating among foster homes, court appearances, and dysfunctional parents. Tragically these especially vulnerable children spend their childhood saying hello and goodbye to temporary adult caretakers and being monitored by overworked, poorly paid, and inadequately trained social workers. As they become older, they have more emotional, behavioural, and academic problems. ... Many of them emerge as delinquents in adolescence," and many of these children invariably find themselves on the streets. Obviously what is lacking in this picture is permanency, stability, and caring. For a number of years, I, along with a number of others, advocated strongly wherever and whenever possible for a Canadian family village association such as the SOS Children's Villages that emerged in Austria after the War. But all this fell on the deaf ears of an unwieldy and, at that time, defensive Ministry. A few years later, the *Gove Report* emerged to the tune of over one-million dollars saying much of what had been said repeatedly to the Ministry of Social Services by the group of which I was a part. Today, even with the *Gove Report* and various appointments of child advocates, etc., the problems of providing alternative care for children who are neglected or abandoned still continue. Thus fodder for the streets is tragically all too readily provided because as a society, we have done little innovative about the crisis in foster care. I mention all this in what might seem to be a bit of a diversion in this presentation, but it is an important diversion for it relates to the sources from which the children who are sexually exploited in our society often come.

The poet, Francis Thompson, once asked what it meant to be a child. Surely it means to share a sense of wonder, to have curiosity, to want to love and be loved, to be open and honest, and above all else, to be trusting. For in trust, there is both hope and joy. But the world today is not a safe, warm, or trustworthy place. Rather, greed, fear, and selfishness have brought about situations where children are sexually exploited and are surrounded by confusion, sadness, and even death.

The sexual exploitation of children has terrible effects not only on its victims but on all of us - everywhere. I for one, have a real sense of foreboding about the future as I become more and more aware of the plight of children the world over. Wherever sexual exploitation occurs, whether it be near or far, whether with small children or young women or young men, it is a trade in human misery destroying the overall fabric of society and making human lives sub-human. People bartered like commodities in a sex trade have little hope of ever knowing the meaning of respect, dignity or even caring, and the whole world is the poorer for it. What is more, children traumatized by such experiences are not too likely to be candidates for building stable societies. As I have already said, children pass on what they tend to know so that the odds are much greater that they will abuse as they have been abused. Amnesty International knows all too well that it is much easier to be a torturer after having been tortured. Conversely, however, we must remember that just as violence begets violence, love and caring do beget love and caring.

The question as I close tonight is where and how are each one of us going to go about restoring some of this love and caring - and commitment - so that the world can yet be a place for children everywhere to share a sense of wonder and most of all, to have trust? What letters are we going to write, to whom are we going to speak, what are we going to set in motion, and what laws are we going to get enforced? We must do this because children the world over are in crisis, and it is the children who carry a culture forward.

Saturday Welcome

Maria LeRose

Hello everyone. Welcome. I was out in the hall cracking the whip. I see a part of my job is making sure we stay somewhat on schedule today. And while it may be annoying throughout the day, you will be grateful at 4:30 this afternoon that I've done it! For those of you who were here last night, welcome back. And those of you who have just joined us this morning, welcome. My name is Maria LeRose. I'm going to be the host, or the moderator, or the master of ceremonies, whatever you want to call me, for today. I'm delighted to be here.

I just wanted to bring everyone together in terms of our thinking and to remind you what the objectives are of today's conference and what the organizers had in mind when they asked everyone to come together. Of course, the conference is called, *It's a Crime*, and the first objective is to raise awareness about the seriousness of the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of our children and youth. We want to let the people know that the problem exists and to name it. I think that we're beginning, perhaps, to have our voices heard because there are a lot of media here looking at us. The second objective of this conference is to build a strong voice with youth toward action. I think it is important; to notice as you look around that we are mixed in age and that we're looking for true participation of youth in seeking solutions. As Cherry Kingsley said last night, it will be the youth who lead us toward solutions in many cases. And the third objective of the conference is to build a Vancouver Alliance that would identify some strategies, support local efforts and build bridges between Vancouver and the province and the nation and internationally. Of course, we're not going to do all that today but I think that the organizers of this conference and all of you know that this can be a real building block today toward something in the future. This can be the core of something and a solution, hopefully.

Before we move on to our first speaker today, I do want to point out that we are surrounded by a lot of cameras. I'll point out who some of these people are. Global is here. And I think Denise Grenier from Radio Canada? Is Radio Canada here? Welcome. CKNW is here. I see a CBC Radio mike here. A BCTV mike. And Michael, our independent film producer is here. We do want to mention that there may be people here who do not want their images on television, and if that is the case, I think that would be respected by everyone. So if you do not want to be on television, one way to do that is raise your hands now. I think you're safe because you're way in the back. Did all the crews see that? Everybody else is okay? There's another one right here. Is that going to be a problem in terms of cutaways? Do you want to raise your hand again? Okay. I think we can assume the media wants to respect that, but we just need to let them know because this will show up on the news tonight and the weekend news.

The other thing that I want to point out is that I noticed last night when the speakers were talking and the drama was happening that I sure felt a lot of emotion and I think a lot of

people in the room did as well. I tossed in my sleep thinking about all the horrors of what's happening out there. And so if you find over the day that some emotions come to the surface or if you really feel like you need to talk to someone or connect with someone for support, I'm happy to report that we do have some peer supporters here. The Dusk to Dawn counsellors are here, Adrienne, Jollene, and Olivia. The way we can connect with them is by going to the Youth Desk and asking. Great. So I think that's about all of the preparations that I'm going to do right now. I have more housekeeping to do as we move through the day but let's get started.

Our first speaker this morning is our Attorney General, Ujjal Dosanjh. He is also the Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Human Rights, and Immigration. He's joining us now.

Opening Address

Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh

Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Human Rights and Immigration

Good morning. I'm not here to lecture you on this issue. Many of you are the experts with respect to this matter and you know what the causes are and how we come to a stage where there are youth at risk on the streets in British Columbia, not just in Vancouver but in many other cities as well. And I think all of us are trying to do our best wherever we are to deal with this issue. I'll go through some of the thinking that leads me to where I have been for the last three or four years in trying to get some laws changed as well as properly enforced, because that's the area that I deal with. And I'll mention perhaps a couple of things about what the Ministry for Children and Families are trying to do so that it may complete the picture for you.

I think, first of all, I recognize that the most important contribution that we can generally make to keeping children and youth off the street, is to continue to provide the best possible services in health care, education, child care, child and family services and the like. And it's very, very important for us to continue to do that. In addition to that, we need to then have very focussed strategies to deal with child prostitution which is abuse, which is a crime. I remember some years ago before I was in Cabinet there was something called the Vancouver Action Plan that poured some resources into Vancouver which included counselling, referral, placement, and the like. And following that, there was the Provincial Action Plan and one part of that was the Provincial Prostitution Unit. When that was announced, I was the Attorney General so I do remember those issues better than the previous ones because I wasn't dealing with them directly.

The Provincial Action Plan also contained some, not very many but some, resources for safe placement, as well as a very focussed enforcement effort through the Provincial Prostitution Unit. This unit is composed of three police officers, a prosecutor, a community liaison person and a social worker. I may have the titles wrong, but there are six people involved and unfortunately, at this time, we have one police officer missing and we're trying to get that third police officer back into the fold so that we can continue to do the work on that very issue. As well, the Ministry for Children and Families, I am told, has about 80 workers right across British Columbia that are called Reconnect Workers that try and connect with street youth all over the province. I'm also told that there are 24 other positions that have either been filled or will be filled with workers specifically for street youth that are involved in the sex trade. And I think it's important that we provide that kind of help and assistance to youth to get off the streets.

There's no question whatsoever in my mind that we require more safe placement, more resources, more counselling, and possibly treatment for those that might be addicted to substances that aren't generally used by people. And I think it's important that we

recognize that we can never do enough. We need to continue to do more and that's my aim always, to try and find money from different parts of my Ministry, even a few thousand at a time, to put into areas where I think it would be useful. I know that the other parts of the mandate are dealt with by other Ministries and I continue to carry the message to our own government that we need to do more with respect to issues such as safe placement and services for street youth right across this province. And I know that right across this country, that's required.

Let me just talk about enforcement for a second. Today marks the coming into effect of the new subsection of the *Criminal Code*, Subsection 212 (4). You know that the *Criminal Code* was amended back in 1996. And from November 1996 to date, I am told that we have laid, against johns and pimps of children and youth, approximately 150 charges right across this province. Some of them have been with the assistance of the Provincial Prostitution Unit, others have been independently investigated and laid by other police forces across the province. And that compares with 8 charges against johns and pimps of children in the previous eight years, from 1988 to 1996. I think that speaks volumes about two things: that a change in law was required and it was made. It wasn't complete and I'll come to that. And what was also required was a more focussed kind of training of police officers, of Crown, as well as a focussed unit that might either investigate these issues itself, or assist other police officers across the province in investigating these matters. So first of all, I want to congratulate, not just the Provincial Prostitution Unit, but all of the police officers across the province because they have made a tremendous effort in penalizing the pimps and johns of children and youth in British Columbia.

Today, new Section 212 (4) comes into effect which is an improved version of what was put in place in 1996. From now on we would not have to prove the state of mind of the accused. As well, purely communicating for the purposes of obtaining services from a child or youth would be a criminal offence. Additionally, there have been improvements in the wiretap law. Previously, this particular subsection was not enumerated in the *Criminal Code* wiretap provision which meant the police power to actually use wiretap evidence to apprehend johns and pimps of children and youth was unclear. It has now been very clearly stated in the *Criminal Code* that police would be able to utilize wiretap evidence to first, apprehend and investigate johns and pimps of children, and to then have successful prosecutions of them using wiretap evidence in court. And I think that's a vast improvement. Usually I criticize the Feds but I must congratulate the Attorney General and the Federal Justice Minister on keeping the promise that a previous Minister of Justice made to me in British Columbia during one of his visits before the last election, that they would amend this section. It was British Columbia that was asking for this change because we were trying to deal with this problem that exists in British Columbia. I know it exists elsewhere but perhaps we were more aware of it because we have activists and people who have been involved in this issue who have been pushing us to do the right thing. And I want to thank them as well, all of you, that have pushed us to do the right thing.

I also want to report to you that I have been raising another issue with respect to the age

of consent. I have raised it at the national Attorney's General Conference, Minister McLellan agreed to consider it. There is a group of officials that are now studying the issue and I want to say this to all of the Attorney's General across the country, including the federal Minister of Justice who I regard as a friend on this issue. I want to see a change in the *Criminal Code* of Canada, I want to see the age of consent raised from 14 to 16 so that we can better apprehend the johns and pimps of children and youth.

I know there are other issues that are related to this very issue. There is the issue of abuse, pedophilia, other issues that go into this very potent and dangerous mix which leads children to the streets. I raised the issue a couple of years ago for a national registry of sex offenders, particularly of pedophiles and dangerous and violent sexual offenders. The federal government agreed reluctantly, because of the pressure, to consider it. The federal government came back last year at the Attorney's General Conference, and said they will not do such a registry. But they will update CPIC which is the database the police use and if the individual provinces are interested in doing registries, they can do those registries on their own. I know Ontario has said that they're going to do a registry of sorts in Ontario. Ontario is a large province, has a much larger population, and their own registry may be viable in the sense that they may be able to have enough of a database. But criminals, pedophiles and abusers of children and youth, and sexual offenders don't stay within provincial boundaries. We need a national registry of sexual and violent offenders to make sure that that information is available to all of the police forces and those that need that information to protect themselves. And we need that national registry now. Not ten years from now. And I know that the federal government may not do it, but I'm going to continue to push. In the interim, as Ontario is developing a registry of sorts, British Columbia is going to start looking at the development of a registry in British Columbia so that we can hook up with Ontario, have a larger database, and try and assist ourselves in protecting children and youth and others who are vulnerable to this kind of issue.

One more thing and then I'll sit down because you have a lot of work to do and I'm only one, small part of this entire campaign and I'm simply an advocate on your behalf, and I want to carry your messages to the national scene and to the provincial Cabinet for any changes that might be made. I know there's a program in British Columbia that has been put together by the Vancouver police. It's called DISC Program, Deter and Identify Sex Consumers. That program is currently in operation in six British Columbia communities. I think it's also operational in Ontario in a couple of communities, and in a community in Iowa. As well, it's used by CN Rail to deal with the issues. What that program does is it puts into a database, information with respect to sex trade workers, be they children, youth, or adults, as well as tries to put in information with respect to consumers into that database so that they have an updated base from which to function both in terms of investigations and prosecution. I'm told that that database has been successful and instrumental in locating young women or older women who are in the sex trade, and men of course. But as well, it has been successful and instrumental in prosecuting some johns and pimps of children and others across, not just British Columbia, but in places like Calgary, with the information that was available on DISC. I'm a fan of DISC. I've heard about it and I also know that they require some money to update and enhance their computers. I am going to give them up to \$75,000 to be able to update their database and

their computers. They told me that it might take \$50,000 but I would pledge this morning to give them \$75,000 so that they can do the work that needs to be done in British Columbia and across this country to protect youth and children and others who are vulnerable in our society.

I want to say in conclusion, that was not the purpose of my visit here [to announce DISC funding]. The main purpose of my visit was to come here and pay tribute to your work and to the work of those like you right across this province and across this country, that day-in and day-out dedicate themselves to eradicating sexual exploitation of children and youth in particular. And so my coming here symbolically means the people of British Columbia pay tribute to your work and thank you for continuing to do the work that you're doing. Keep up the good work. Thank you.

[Morning Panel: National and International Perspectives of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth](#)

[Dr. Jacquelyn Nelson](#)

Senior Policy Analyst with the Ministry of Attorney General and Chair of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution

Thank you. I'd like to thank all of the conference organizers for bringing all of us together to talk about the sexual exploitation of children and youth within the framework of global issues. The shocking reality of children and youth as commodities on a world market cannot be ignored. I'm speaking today as the Co-chair of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution which undertook, in 1992, to bring forward recommendations on a range of issues including the sexual exploitation of youth. We released our report in December 1998. Members of the Working Group carried out consultations across Canada with youth involved in the sex trade as well as with service providers, specific groups such as representatives of Aboriginal communities, police and advocacy groups. But even with the consultations, there were a lot of gaps in what we knew and we tried to fill in these gaps either with research that we undertook as a working group such as the research on the relationship between violence and the communicating law, and a recent study that we're still doing on men who buy sex, or by linking in with some studies that are being done in Canada. A good example of that is our survey of 75 sexually exploited youth in Victoria.

Who are these youth?

I'd like to say that we were able to develop a profile of the youth who are being exploited in the sex trade in Canada but it wasn't as simple as that. We found some things that describe most sexually exploited youth but there are also differences. Among the constants is violence. The rate of serious assault and violent sexual assaults, and even homicides, on these youth is very high. Many youths become dependent on drugs or alcohol which makes their lives very dangerous and it makes exiting the sex trade more difficult. How young are they? Well, we found that commercial sexual exploitation starts early in the lives of many of the people and the averages that we found from different pieces of research vary from 15½ in the Victoria study, to 14 in the BC consultation, to 13 in the recent McCreery study that was released earlier this week. They looked at youth in Kelowna, Kamloops, Prince George, and Nanaimo. All of these numbers are averages which means that many youth start much earlier. We also found that the youth involved are a diverse group. Many, but by no means all, experienced either sexual or physical abuse at home. Many are runaways or homeless but some youth are actually brought into the sex trade by their parents and actually trade sex while they're living at home.

We found a couple of things in terms of patterns. For example, Aboriginal sexually exploited youth in British Columbia have frequently left home to travel to an urban area

where they became even more marginalized, homeless and sexually exploited. The longer a youth lives on the street, the greater his or her chance of becoming sexually exploited in order to survive or to earn money. Some girls are recruited into the sex trade through a party circuit. For example, young girls in Nova Scotia may party on freighters and may soon find themselves trapped in and victimized by the commercial sex trade. What about males? There are more males involved in the sex trade than perhaps we'd thought of before and they have some different patterns. For example they often have regular clients whom they visit at home and this has some consequences for enforcement, as well as for social supports.

So there are clear differences in sexual exploitation of youth due to cultural, environmental, and family factors. But I would think that we would see these differences multiplied as we take a more global perspective. Unfortunately, we know very little about international trafficking in youth who are brought into Canada, except that we know it happens. However, we do know that interprovincial trafficking occurs regularly in Canada by organized groups of pimps who move youth around on circuits. Halifax to Montreal and Toronto; Edmonton and Calgary to Kamloops and Vancouver; even Nanaimo to Vancouver. Some of these youths are kept as slaves. Some are allowed to earn small amounts of money but are bought and sold as property and are charged a leaving fee if they wish to get out.

How should Canada address sexual exploitation of youth?

Prevention is obviously important. As well, if there was a consensus on any of the consultation issues it was that youth need services that are accessible and relevant to their own backgrounds. In British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in particular, consultations identified a need to better address the particular circumstances of First Nations youth. Equally important in the view of Canadians is the need to ensure that Justice personnel from police to judges recognize the dynamics of sexual exploitation of youth. When this occurs, truly effective steps can be taken. For example, in Nova Scotia there was a task force in the early 1990s to counter the growing number of professional pimps with interprovincial circuits who were recruiting and using girls in the sex trade in Halifax, Montreal, and Toronto. It was a dedicated task force of police and Crown and they were very successful in getting kids out of the sex trade and arresting and convicting pimps. In British Columbia, we borrowed some of these ideas but unlike Nova Scotia where the focus was just on youth in one city, we had to tackle the whole province. We focussed on training police and as the Attorney General just pointed out, we've had considerable success. Some of this credit is due to the Unit and its training and awareness efforts across the province. But credit must also be given to people such as those of you who are here today, in pushing for an awareness all across Canada that "it's a crime." It's not prostitution. It's child abuse.

The results of the Working Group's efforts

I think the Working Group has had some success. We forwarded our interim

recommendations to the federal government in 1995 and that was partially responsible for some changes. Bill C-27 which came into force in 1997 focussed on child sex tourism and the sexual exploitation of youth. A number of the final recommendations that the working group made were also included in the recent Bill C-51 which the Attorney General just referred to and those provisions came into force today. But some of the recommendations of the Working Group have yet to be implemented across Canada. For example, the need to treat youth who have been exploited in the sex trade as being in need of assistance rather than as offenders is an approach seen in some cities but certainly not in the majority. We believe that a key factor in addressing the sexual exploitation of youth is an integrated approach to social supports for youth and enforcement against the people who exploit them. Towards that end, the working group is now developing an approach for raising awareness in key government sectors across Canada such as Child Welfare and Justice departments. Our hope is not only to push for an integrated approach to enforcement and social support, but to provide some of the tools necessary to actually put this into action.

As awareness of the victimization of these youths grows, it's my view that Canadians will take strong steps to address commercial sexual exploitation of these youths as a serious global problem. This is not a problem owned by just one agency or just one level of government or just one Ministry. It's not a problem that belongs to just one city or one group of people. The sexual exploitation of youth and children has penetrated all layers of society. We need to work together. We can no longer afford to simply take an adversarial approach, lobbying each other for more effective action. We have to turn to the resources at hand to recognize what each of us can do, and act as partners in putting strategies together which will stop the sexual exploitation of children and youth in whatever form it emerges. Thank you.

[Dr. Yasmin Jiwani](#)

Executive Coordinator, FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children

Thank you. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the First Peoples' of this land and for giving me the space here to be able to say these words, I would also like to acknowledge the conference organizers and everybody in the audience. And to acknowledge in particular, my Aboriginal sisters.

I would like to begin, first of all, by focussing my presentation on two very integrated issues. One is the issue of difference and the other is the issue of structure, the very mechanism which make sexual exploitation possible. Let me tell you at the outset, in our perspective, and in terms of the work we do, we're not really interested in factors which would lend themselves to a psychological examination in terms of why people feel the way they do. We're more interested in why society permits the kinds of things that happen, to happen. We're interested in why certain groups have privilege over other groups and how these structures of domination and oppression interact to make certain

groups more vulnerable to violence than others.

I want to start off with the whole notion of children and youth. We talk about children and youth. A lot of government policy is framed in terms of children and youth. But children and youth are generic categories. They don't take into consideration, gender differences. They don't take into consideration the fact that girls and boys are raised differently, they are rewarded differently, they are perceived differently and they are framed differently. So how one is actually brought up is very important in how one gets treated. What kind of position one has in society is really critical to how one is seen, heard, or given voice in society. And those are very important factors.

Internationally, it's been found, for instance, that girls tend to be less immunized, tend to be breast fed a lot less, suffer a lot more in terms of health, are discriminated against in terms of access to education, access to information, access to health care, are exploited more. But even when we look here in Canada, there are startling differences. If one were to begin to unpack the general statistics that are packaged under the rubric of children and youth, one would find amazing differences. For instance, girls are the victims in 80% of the cases involving sexual assault by a family member. If one were to look at police statistics in terms of sexual assaults that have been reported, most are girls. If one were to look at statistics on kidnapping and abduction, most are teenage girls. If one were to map violence along gender lines, we would find that more than half the women in this country, young women under the age of 18 who have experienced violence, are girls. So there are definite gender differences. There are gender differences in terms of how the sex trade actually gets played out. There are gender differences in terms of which strolls are allocated to girls versus boys, and who is controlled by pimps - in terms of girls versus boys. So there are a lot of gender differences.

But more than that, more than gender differences, the most critical factor underlying the ways in which differences are communicated and differences get played out within this whole arena of sexual exploitation is power and hierarchy. Certain groups are more exploitable than others, and that has to do with the hierarchy within this country. It is not surprising then that when one begins to look at this hierarchy and crosses it with a gender access, one begins to see the groups that are the most vulnerable to sexual exploitation. I'm talking here about the First Nations, I'm talking here about Aboriginal girls because not only are Aboriginal people, within this nation state that we call Canada, at the very bottom, but being at the very bottom, they are constructed as those that are not only rejected and dispossessed, but the disposable ones. That's why it's not surprising to see the number of deaths as a result of sexual exploitation, as a result of the violence of the sex trade, among Aboriginal girls. It is not surprising that street involved girls, who are mostly Aboriginal, have a mortality rate that is 40 times the national average.

When one begins to look at that in terms of how this hierarchy gets played out, it is not surprising then, to see that the next group of really vulnerable young women and girls are poor women, immigrant and refugee young women and girls, are all the girls who are rendered more vulnerable because of the intersecting forces of sexism and racism combined; sexism and homophobia combined; sexism and ableism combined. If you look

at statistics of girls with disability, one would find that they are at least four times more vulnerable to sexual violence than the average. So when one begins to look at this, all of these factors actually come together and the intersection of gender-based discrimination with forces of oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, combine to make certain groups of young women and girls more vulnerable to violence.

Now, my focus here is on what makes this happen. Why is it possible? How can we live in a society that has an incredible standard of living, that has the privilege, that has all of those things that make it a "progressive, developed nation" in the hierarchy of nations. How is it that we could permit that? How is it that we could permit a situation where Canada ranks second in terms of child poverty? Where one in three children in the cities and one in five children in rural areas comes from a family which is poor? How can we permit that and what are the factors that make the trade possible? What are the factors that make exploitation possible? I want to point out that within the literature and within the research that we've done in this area, one of the key debates around this whole issue of exploitation is what's known as the work/agency debate. In other words, is this sex work, is this work that people engage in because it's work, because they want to do it as work? Our focus here is not so much to get into this debate, but to look at the conditions that make sexual exploitation, sex work, possible in the first instance. What is it that makes this work?

One of the key factors, as I pointed out, is poverty. If we're looking at national/international linkages, poverty is one of the most crucial variables and it's there because when you look at who the dispossessed here are, who the disposable ones here are, and if you look at the nation states where sexual exploitation is being carried on, where there are major markets occurring, it's those groups, that cluster of nations that is generally considered the South. In other words, the ones that don't have power, privilege, control. The ones whose economies have been rendered hostage to the Western world. I'm talking here about the impact of structural adjustment programs, the impact of globalization, the impact of aid, the impact of multinationals going in where the sex trade sites are happening. And it's not surprising that when one looks at it like that, it's countries which are extremely dependent on foreign currency, it's countries where foreign invasion, incursion, occupation has already occurred: in the form of U.S. military bases, in the form of war, sites of war. So you've got a situation where the power hierarchy that's in this country is also mirrored in terms of this country's position in relation to other countries internationally.

Within the international sex trade, it is very interesting that what comes together are facets of what is already happening here. Within the West, there is an incredible glorification and an incredible valorization of youth. It is amazing to see magazines that are coming out now where every single model looks like she's younger than the previous model. Where more and more of these models are becoming waif-like. They are so thin, so emaciated, so malnourished, but that is held up as the sign of beauty. That is held up as the way in which one ought to be, the normative value, the normative body, the sign of beauty. It's a combination of age and gender that makes this possible. It is not just happening to boys. It is very much coming out of what happens to girls. When one looks

at sexual exploitation, when one looks at sexualized violence, the thing that's underpinning that violence is power relations. It is how you can exert power over that which is considered to be powerless. When one is young, when one is thin, emaciated, all of those things connote a situation of vulnerability, a situation of powerlessness which then allows for the dominance to occur.

But what's happening internationally is not only that the glamourization of and the complete focussing on youth takes place, but combined with that is the whole discourse of exoticization. It is the discourse of difference and historically, it's been mapped out in many different works. What we're seeing is a playing out of Orientalism where the West has constructed a particular picture of the East, and the women of the East are then considered to be palatable as sexual objects. You're seeing the fusion of two different discourses which allow this to happen. Propelling that is the whole notion of youth, childhood, innocence, etc. with virginity which is this whole notion which renders one into thinking, "Oh, if they're young, if they're untouched, if they're pure, that means they don't have AIDS." This is one of the factors that's moving the international sexual exploitation movement of men because they go out there thinking that they can use these bodies and that because these bodies are so young, they won't get contaminated with AIDS. As a result, many of these countries are now seeing an escalation in AIDS of the kind that is not happening anywhere else. It's all being taken over there.

One of the things that is so critical in this whole area is to look at relations, not just of dominance, but how they work together, how they reinforce each other. So in a sense - I'm going to borrow from Sherene Razak's work - Razak describes a situation in Victorian England where she talks about bourgeois men who go out into the slums. They go out into these "zones of degeneracy," the idea being that when they go in there, they test out what's out there, they test out their masculinity, they become rejuvenated, they come back, and they reinforce bourgeois notions not just of masculinity, but of respectability. She argues that that's what sustained these two moral areas at that time in England. And she brings it to contemporary times by locating the Third World, the countries of the South, where all of this stuff is taking place, as those areas "of moral degeneracy" where the West can go. Western men can go there, they can fantasize, they can play out their fantasies, they can get their masculinities reaffirmed and come back to the respectability of the West.

This is, in essence, what's happening here. It's happening not just internationally, it's happening here in Canada when you look at the hierarchy. Because who is it that goes down to frequent the street? Who is it that gets a sense of their morality and respectability reinforced? And who is it that actually has a relationship where they want to exert so much power and dominance, that they go after those who are dispossessed, those who are most vulnerable?

Having laid that out, I'd like to end with something that we discovered when we were doing our research. This, by the way, is part of the research that the Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence, of which the FREDA Centre is a member, conducted last summer. We spoke to girls across the country, and one of the things that came through

very clearly is that they are very aware of how they are being perceived, treated and devalued. Many of the girls in the focus groups that we conducted said that the ideals of beauty, the ideals of what are considered to be beautiful in this society as a girl are unreachable for many of them. And for some of them that can achieve it, it shows them that they can, in fact, use that to get what they want. So it's a matter of seeing what's rewarded and what's not. The things that are rewarded are the things that make them sexualized objects. It's very easy, once you get rewarded in that way, to accept it and to use it. After all, we try to use whatever skills we have to survive.

On the other hand, it's the glamourization of street life as it is portrayed that reflects what society values and rewards. These pictures are not very different from the pictures of the rewards of assimilation that immigrant women and girls get from mainstream society and from the mainstream media. That's the ideological tool that keeps the system going. So we have to deconstruct all of those things. We have to deconstruct the whole notion of choice. And I think, more importantly, we have to look at this whole matter structurally, because when men go to parts of the world that are away, that are foreign, that are exoticized, to do what they have to do in order to get their masculinities reaffirmed, at the same time these very men are also closing the doors to this country. How else are the women, and the girls, and the boys, and the men who are impoverished and rendered into desperate situations there, supposed to escape those situations?

We have to tie this into the immigration debate, we have to tie it into who gets citizenship, who is considered to be a citizen in this nation and who is accorded that right. And when you look at the recent directions that the immigration and citizenship Ministry is going, it is alarming to see that the doors are closing, that the only way those people are going to be able to get into this country is as migrant workers. As migrant workers, they will have to pay their taxes and they will have to do the work, but they won't have any rights. And if you look at domestic workers and you look at their vulnerability to violence, it's there. It's forefront in the research, it's not new. Any kind of dependency situation is going to engender some form of violence. And what we're doing as a country is essentially perpetuating not only a dichotomy in terms of a north-south relationship, but also we are fuelling the sex trade.

Think about it. Why would women and girls be strapped to the bottom of a truck to come into this country? What would propel someone to do that? Why would girls and young women from Thailand come into this country to work as sex slaves? Who would work as sex slaves? We have to interrogate the whole notion of choice and we have to interrogate how all of these systems interlock to make this possible. How is it that we can valorize youth, exoticize difference, and at the same time do what we're doing in the name of justice? We've always argued, at the FREDA Centre and within the women's movement, that we need to dismantle structures of oppression. We need to dismantle the dynamics of power and domination. And we need to create a situation of accessibility, equality and justice because that's the bottom line. Thank you.

[Laura Park](#)

Ph.D. Candidate, Psychology Department, Carleton University

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here from Ottawa. I'm going to talk to you about a slightly different issue but one that is definitely related. I've been looking at the ways that children are treated as witnesses by the Canadian justice system during sexual abuse trials for the past four years now. As part of this research program, I've examined the sexual abuse testimony of about 30 children between the ages of 4 and 13 and I've come today to share my results with you. I'll admit from the outset though, that the bulk of my research findings have been perceived by audiences as rather discouraging and perhaps this information may not be new to you. But we must continue to think of positive ways to use this information to promote change.

I'll begin by stating that children possess a special legal status in our society. For example, we don't sell them cigarettes and alcohol, we don't let them drive, and a contract I might make with my 5-year-old niece to exchange her future lifetime income for a dish of ice cream whenever she demands it, would never stand up in a court of law. This special legal status exists because children do not possess the same intellectual capabilities as adults and therefore, they can be more easily manipulated at the hands of more mature individuals. As a result, this special legal status serves to protect children from exploitation. However, I've found a contradiction in the legal system when it comes to dealing with children. When children are playing in the playground or playing in a school yard, they are treated by the law as what they are, minors in need of legal protection. But once a child enters a courtroom to become a witness, this legal protection from manipulation is withdrawn by the court. On the witness stand, adult agents of the court are permitted to use their higher level of mental development to manipulate and deceive children. Thus the legal process repeats the very violation and exploitation from which the proceedings are intended to protect them.

So how are children exploited in the courtroom? On the witness stand, children are held responsible for their sexuality but seen as incapable of providing responsible testimony when, in fact, the exact opposite is the case. The first issue that the courts hold children responsible for their sexuality was discovered by looking at the types of questions that lawyers ask children on the witness stand. There are a variety of these lines of questioning. I'll give you an example. An 8-year-old was asked, "Did Mr. M. ever grab you? He never forced you to do anything? He never yelled at you?" And the child says, "No." And the defence then states, "Well according to your story, you kept going there for 2½ years and you knew every time what was going to happen and you just kept going back. Is that what you're telling us?" So questions such as these which imply the child consented or even encouraged the sexual advances, were asked repeatedly of the children in my sample.

But these types of questions are completely inappropriate and should not be permitted in the courtroom. The law makes very clear that full and complete responsibility rests with

adults to refrain from all sexual activity with a child. So if the law is so clear on this issue, why do lawyers waste their time asking these inappropriate questions and why do judges permit them to be asked? Because these questions are a tactic designed to instil doubt and to divert attention away from the fact that it is the adult's responsibility, not the child's, to refrain from the sexual activity. It is sad, however, that lawyers and judges, well trained in the laws of this country, can so easily overlook this one legal issue which would save child witnesses much stress on the stand and subsequent feelings of guilt and blame.

The second issue pertains to the lack of respect paid to children's mental capabilities in the courtroom. During cross examination, the goal of the defence is to discredit and undermine the witness using strategic questioning. As a result, child witnesses are often asked questions requiring skills that are beyond their current level of understanding. Developmental psychology literature tells us that children come to understand concepts like distance, size, and time gradually as they age. So, for example, around the age of 8 or 10, the concept of distance is understood and described in terms of far, near, short, long. An appropriate question for this age range would be, "You remember the lake where Mr. S. grabbed you, right? Is this lake a short walk for you?" Around the age of 11 to 13, distance is understood at a new level. A child can make comparisons in distance. An appropriate question for this age level might be, "Does it take longer to walk to the lake than to walk to school?" And so finally at about the age of 14 and older, distance comes to be understood and described in its units of measurement such as kilometres or inches. So questions such as, "How many kilometres is the lake from your home?" or "How many miles does it take you to walk to the lake?" are more appropriate.

However, I found that in every one of my cases, the lawyers asked - and these are prosecutors asking these questions as well as the defence - they're asking children as young as 5 to describe dimensions such as distance or size in their units of measurement which they have no way of understanding until the age of about 14 or so. So examples of these types of questions are, "How long would you visit with daddy when you went to visit his apartment? Would it be a matter of minutes?" That was asked of a 5-year-old. An 8-year-old was asked, "How big is the living room at Mr. Hart's house? Well perhaps if you can't tell us the measurements, you could point out an area in the courtroom that is similar in size." These sound outrageous but they are asked all the time.

These types of questions may sound not so difficult for many of us in this room although I'm not really sure I could give you the dimensions of my living room. But imagine asking a 5-year-old these questions. What kind of reliable or accurate estimates would you get from an 8-year-old. So it's not surprising then that children are often confused by these types of questions and say, "I don't know." Or when pressured to respond, they might make inaccurate estimates. In the courtroom "I don't know," or an inaccurate estimate are perceived as evidence of the child's inability to be a good witness. But the child is going to have difficulty giving his or her testimony in a courtroom if a lawyer is going to draw out this testimony using questions that make little sense to the child. Clearly, the courtroom tactic of posing developmentally inappropriate questions does not prove that the children are incompetent witnesses concerning the details of their sexual

abuse experiences. Rather, it highlights the insensitivity of such legal practices. This process is similar to asking an adult a question in a foreign language and suggesting that their lack of response or inaccurate answer is because they are a bad, or incredible, or incapable witness.

So what is the solution to this problem? The solution is not difficult. For the courts to obtain reliable information from children, it is essential that questions be asked in the courtroom which the child is capable of answering. Communication is a two-way street. It does not rest on the child alone. We cannot make a child accountable for defending their sexuality when it is not their responsibility. Nor can we suggest that justice is done when the bulk of a child's testimony is based on questions which they may or may not have understood. The appropriate way for the court to proceed is through a pre-trial assessment of the child's mental level. An assessment of the child's cognitive ability would establish the restrictions to be placed on the content and wording of the questions asked by lawyers.

The judge also has a clear role to play in child sexual abuse cases. He or she must watch over the proceedings to enforce the form and level of questioning that provides children with the protection they need. The court itself cannot become a party to victimizing the child with a new form of exploitation.

This is not an impossible or even a particularly difficult task. The occasional judge will try to do the very things I am suggesting. For example, one judge characterized a defence lawyer by saying the following, "You've asked three questions in one Mr. Garson. I'm having difficulty with the questions. I'm allowing all the leeway in the world but you are dealing with a young lady and I think the questions should be simple."

In closing, I'd like to leave you with these thoughts. The current legal doctrine has not only failed to protect children but has actually subjected them to a secondary form of abuse by the very process designed to protect them. Clearly a new round of law reform is needed. The problem is with the legal process, not the child, and it is fundamental. Now it is up to us, as a community, to show our outrage and push hard for law reform. These injustices in our legal system must end. We can no longer idly sit by and allow our legal system to exploit our children. It is time that we demand truth, equality, and fairness from our justice system.

Brent Parfitt

Deputy Ombudsman for the Province of British Columbia

Thank you very much. I'm both embarrassed and humbled this morning. Embarrassed because I am a lawyer and after Laura's talk, I should be. And I'm humbled because I'm speaking to you and you, after all, as Mr. Dosanjh said, you're the experts. You're the youth, you're the care workers, the street workers, the advocates, and the public servants who devote your lives to helping youth that society has failed. I think we all come this

morning with common assumptions that things can get better. That if we could put more into resources and integrate our social services, commercial sexual exploitation of children, drug abuse, and youth crime would lessen, if not disappear. All of us in this field have been exposed to a number of disappointments and frustrations in dealing with government agencies and indeed, our own clientele. But we keep the faith and we keep on working. I see in the audience, people that have been doing this for 30 and 40 years some of them. The Sandy Cookes, the John Turveys of this province who can stick it out. The Cherry Kingsleys. And it always is amazing to me that despite all the setbacks and all the disappointments, they're able to carry on.

Before I talk about what I was going to talk about, and that's mainly the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, I'd just like to respond to something that the Attorney General was saying, and that's with respect to the whole issue around child abuse registries and the like. In 1985, we produced a report about criminal records checks for people working with vulnerable people. A number of you are working with agencies that provide services to young children and youth and you probably have a procedure around criminal records checks where you have to get a criminal records check before you can work with the organization. In our 1985 report, we stressed that that was extremely important, in fact mandatory. Furthermore, we noted that criminal records checks are not a panacea because most of the pedophiles and abusers are not going to show up on those criminal records searches. And I think you know that. So what you have to do, above and beyond that, is to look into reference checks on these individuals and explore with the people who are prior employers: "Were there any issues around this person that caused you concern?" "Was there anything irregular in behaviour patterns?" and "How long did they work for you? Was it a short period of time? Was it a long period of time? Do you know why they moved from the prior job?" Issues like that are really important.

Mr. Dosanjh also brought up the issue of a child abuse registry and our office firmly endorsed the idea of that type of registry which would go beyond just criminal records checks and look into accusations made about individuals who may be working with vulnerable children. I realize that in those areas we're on thin ice because you also have to consider the rights of the individual who may well be falsely accused. But I can tell you this, there are models out there that can fulfil the function of protecting our children while at the same time, looking after the rights of individuals who may be falsely accused. So for those of you who would say, "No, it's just too much work, it's too much effort. There's a real down side to doing that," all those issues can be negotiated and worked out so that you can have a fair abuser registry like that anticipated in Manitoba and perhaps Ontario. I think it does warrant further consideration and I think it is possible in order to protect the youth and children of this country.

What intrigues me about the work I've been doing with children over the last 10 or 15 years is the area of the rights of children. In 1987, I was introduced to a draft form of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* and it took my imagination. Here are all the things we as advocates believe in, contained in one document. It's a fine document. It's well written, it's all encompassing. But my sorrow is that it's seldom used and if we, as advocates - and I'm telling you this very clearly - if we, as advocates fail to use this

document, along with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and similar legislation, we're doing a disservice to our clients. In the brochure that was produced for this conference, it made reference to the current Court of Appeal case we're all aware of concerning child pornography. I think our shock and horror about the outcome of that trial and the fact that it's being appealed, I think that we'll all applaud. I was wondering if the lawyers presenting this case have thought about the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* in presenting the appeal. So I contacted Crown Counsel and asked whether their office had considered arguing the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. I put them in touch with some experts in the field and some relevant case law and was able to spend two hours with Counsel going through, in particular, Article 34 of the *Convention*. And for those of you who are involved in advocating for children in these types of circumstances, please be aware (and I'm going to read it out):

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent: (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

And then further in Article 35, that,

States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

That section seems to hit it on the nose with respect to some of the issues we're talking about. As you know, there was a Swedish conference some years ago that probably Cherry alluded to. I think she was probably about the only youth designate in a conference that was set up to deal with the sexual exploitation of youth. That's got to be bizarre in the first instance. And from all accounts, I hear she bowled the audience over because she was the only person there that could speak from real experience. What was interesting about that conference was that our office was phoned a couple of weeks prior to the conference and asked, "We'd really like the youth take on commercial sexual exploitation. Can you give a sort of a view from Vancouver of what's happening?" I wondered how I was going to deal with that issue, how would I know. So I phoned up Cherry and I said, "Cherry, I've been tasked with this issue. Could you help me out?" Cherry said, "Sure. Let's do a walk-about." I'd been used to doing walk-about but we did a fairly thorough walk-about of Davie and then we went down to Hastings and then we went down to Powell Street and Commercial, and we talked to the young people involved. We invited them to join us for breakfast - which happened to be 2:30 in the afternoon for them - to talk about some of the issues; issues around prevention, issues around services, and things like that. The reason we did this is because authorities in our country were going to Sweden to talk about the sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry.

So a number of them agreed to come, along with their advocates, and we had an interesting lunch. But we got hammered. And we got hammered because when we were there, the young people, and rightly so, said, "You're talking about the sexual exploitation of children in other countries. For crying out loud, why aren't you looking on your own streets. Why aren't you doing something about that first?" And we were rightly chastized and we took that message back to both Senator Pearson and Mr. Axworthy before they left. And as a result, you probably know as Cherry mentioned, a few years later we ended up with the *Out from the Shadows* conference which was a remarkable conference. I think it's the first international conference of its kind that involved just young people talking about issues that they're well aware of. We had invited the Attorney General, the Secretary of State and other people in an in-camera session to listen to what the young people had concluded after four days of meeting. And we, of course, offered our services as alleged experts in law and things like that to assist them in putting together their declaration and agenda for action. And they politely refused our services, and rightly so. The document they came out with, that I believe is in your material, I think is a superb piece of work. I've used it in my international travels in working with other countries, in all countries who are having to come to grips with this terrible, terrible social issue.

But the young people at that conference have subsequently become advocates for the cause which was a very empowering situation for a number of them. Just to give you two examples, I was speaking in Calgary two weeks ago and one of the youth in the audience, also a participant, was there advocating on behalf of young men who are involved in commercial sexual exploitation. I had another interesting experience. I was down in Brazil on business a few weeks ago and I took the advantage of meeting up with one of the young women who was there and I couldn't believe the transformation as a result of that conference. She met with other young people in similar circumstances and she became unbelievably empowered. From a young woman who could not speak English when I met her, after a year she spoke fluent English. She was in a group home where she was organizing the young women who also were involved in commercial sexual exploitation and becoming their advocate, and training them to become advocates in their own community. For me, that was one of the most heartening experiences of the whole conference. There was another young woman there as well and things didn't work out so well for her and I was told that she was back on the streets again. But she was very empowered back on the streets apparently, and was attempting to organize young people around some of the issues that came up at the conference.

This points to the whole issue of the youth voice. If there were only one Article under the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* that ever had been ratified or promulgated, it would have to be, for me, Article 12. So much flows from Article 12 of the *Convention*, I'm sure you, as advocates, are aware of it. It says that:

State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

That's so fundamental to our service delivery system. I cannot fathom policy-makers or

service providers developing any service or policy without youth input. I think this is crucial to our development. It's like a business. If I was running a business and I failed to listen to my customer, I can guarantee you that I wouldn't be in business very long. But when it comes to children we seem, with our expertise, to be able to come in and make decisions for them even where we have an inclination that these decisions may fail. I've seen that in the work of our office, that without youth participation in the service provisions and the programs, they're going to fail. We all hear about ADR, alternative dispute resolution and the ways to avoid the court. It's sort of like the panacea now. We never have to go to court any more, it's all ADR. And it's good. It's good. But one of the fundamental principles of alternative dispute resolution is people must buy in to the resolution. And if you buy in to the resolution, you're part of that resolution and the resolution is going to be lasting. And I think the same can be said when we're dealing with young people. If they're not part of that decision-making process respecting themselves, that's going to fail. So no matter how good the foster home, no matter how good the group home, no matter how good the service, if the young person isn't part of that decision making, it's doomed to failure.

I think in closing, I'd just like to strongly recommend that you, as advocates for young people and children, and we are all in this room, that you take a look at this *Convention*, that in your day-to-day lives, you think in terms of what you're doing and measure it against the provisions and the principles found in that *Convention*. Thank you very much for your attention.

Question Period

The first question I'd like to ask Dr. Nelson to answer. You produced a report of federal/provincial recommendations. I'd like to know whether or not that's addressing the issue of pedophiles and sex offenders that are in federal penitentiaries. When they're released and their parole hearings are up, what obligation is there for the federal penitentiary to let the community know? This question is asked in reference to a man who sexually abused 32 young Aboriginal boys and who had only been sentenced for 6 years. He was released without any form of therapeutic counselling required at all when he was in the institution.

Not as part of the Working Group but as part of the British Columbia Attorney General. The issues you raised around pedophile records is extremely important. It's been a priority. We've been lobbying the federal government to take issue on it very seriously. Detective Noreen Waters has been supplying us with quite a lot of information on this on the number of pedophiles who are released, who have been given pardons, and who are released and therefore there is no record. This is one of the reasons the Attorney General has been lobbying for a sex offender registry across Canada, so I can say we've taken it very seriously. I'm not completely pleased with how much the federal government has moved on the issue yet.

The next question I'd like to ask of Dr. Jiwani. You made reference to the socialization of domination and the whole emulation of what beauty is and how that is referenced in terms of how First Peoples or young Aboriginal girls in particular are more prone to violence. And I'd like to ask the question, how can we work with mainstream society to deconstruct domination in the kind of work that we're doing?

You've asked me a question that demands a whole thesis unto itself. I'll start by saying that in reference to the whole construction of beauty, we need to have a number of different things in place. It's very interesting that when we were looking at eating disorders, we discovered one country whose Princess had died of an eating disorder and that particular country, I believe it's Sweden, actually passed a law which banned publications and advertisements which featured women that were underweight. We need to do something major like that. We also need to make sure that the voices and the standards of beauty that are inherent in every culture are respected so that you don't have a normative, one-monolith model that everybody strives for. And I have to bring up the whole story of Reena Virk as a tragic case of someone who tried so hard to fit in, but who could never be accepted for what she was. I think we need to have our own media to be able to put out our own images, tell our own stories. We need to have a major debate and a major opening in the mainstream papers about things that are simply taken for granted. Let's look at the Pocahontas story as a good start. We need to engage with systems at multiple levels if we're even going to begin the task of dismantling this. And in order to do that, we need to have voice at every one of those levels, we need to have representation at every one of those levels. We cannot have a system that has just an elite governing the major modes of communication in this country. And that's what we have.

We in fact, have a cartel that's owned by Southam. So come on. We need to take this on!

Ms. Park, there have been all kinds of research put out in mainstream society about pedophilia. One of the things it continuously points to is the fact that there are no therapeutic models that can heal them. So what's the solution besides warehousing them in institutions and letting them back out in the community?

In terms of the first thing that you mentioned about all these studies on the therapy and so on for sexual offenders in penitentiaries, at Carleton there's a lot of research being done in that area. To be perfectly honest, there's not been any therapy that's really been found to be helpful in terms of changing these behaviours or these thought patterns. It's discouraging. There has been a lot of work done but nothing has really been successful. In terms of trying to find a solution, I don't really have an answer, I'm afraid. I think that we certainly need to get a registry of these people when they get out of the penitentiaries. We've started that in Ontario and that's just recently been brought up but I think that we need to have really strict methods of keeping track of these offenders when they're let out of the penitentiaries and have them register and have their names known and where they live and so on, so that we can keep an eye on where they are and keep them away from the children.

Mr. Parfitt, I'd like to ask if Canada is a signatory to the international Children's Convention, how do we make our judges enforce that Convention?

Maybe I can have a chance to answer your previous question as well. Going to some of your Native traditions, I was in Alert Bay not too long ago and we were talking about exactly this problem. How do we protect our children from pedophiles after they spend their time in jail and there's no way to put a hold on them through habitual status or whatever. I was told about some of the customs of how pedophiles were dealt with in at least this one community in the old days. They were forced, by the community, to atone for their acts publicly. This had a couple of very positive features. One, everybody in the community knew that they had a predisposition to pedophilia for a start. Secondly, it didn't revictimize the victim. That person would have to take responsibility for all of that action and everybody would acknowledge that. And the last thing, and this may not work in our society, but if it happened again, the persons were banished and there were various ways of doing that to keep them away from society, period. As I say, that probably wouldn't work in this society. To answer the question you raised, how do you make this *Convention* a reality with respect to our courts? Well for a starter, education obviously is the big thing, not only educating judges, but education of prosecutors and defence counsel as well. This is a piece of law that you can use at least for persuasive purposes in our courts. Some lawyers shy away from it because it's not domestic law. A lot of the principles and the articles in the *Convention* have, in fact, been translated into domestic law already. Those that haven't, can be used for persuasive effect. But the other way, and I think what we should all be striving for, is to put that *Convention* into domestic law either at a federal or a provincial level. In my travels to the rest of the world talking about the *Convention*, it's interesting that the new, developing republics in the former Soviet Union have automatically included this *Convention* as part of their domestic law. In fact,

if there's a dispute between a domestic law of the country and the *Convention*, the *Convention* supersedes, which is highly unusual. But this is the way some other countries are dealing with this *Convention*. So those are some ideas.

There are three P's in the international Convention. The three P's are protection, provision, and participation of the children in the whole process. Under that Convention where there is sexual abuse, can the children sue their parents for not having provided protection?

Yes, they can. In a civil action, you can, for assault.

How about government being party to that action?

Well, indirectly that could occur through an FOA application where you can make the parents liable for paying what the state has to pay for the child. But I'm not aware of any legislation where the state takes the position of the child in some form of civil action against the parent.

Excuse me. At 14-years-old, I was told by the Ministry of Social Services that the only option I had was to sue my parents and I went, "Oh, okay." And they told me this for awhile and then I finally thought, "Yeah, damn it. I am going to." I had no support any which way, whatsoever. I was working completely on paper. But you show me a 14-year-old kid that knows how to go about that and where the support is to show them how to do that and then you'll have a solution.

Well one of the ways is to go under the Four Challenges Program and literally, get someone to sue those who've failed in their duty to those children. My last question is for Dr. Jiwani. We have known each other for years. Yasmin, you talked about privilege and power. These are issues you and I have discussed for a long, long time. It's always the security of colour. The West is superior because it has colonized the East which was inferior. The biggest problem we face in Canada today in everything that we do is the denial of racism. How would your organization, literally, dealing with these issues, help us in bringing that sensitivity, not within the people but within the people who have the power, the power to make decisions?

Yes, I agree with you totally. There is a major denial of racism that is part of the Canadian national character. It's amazing to me, especially when I look at British and American research all the time, that they talk about it, they acknowledge it. But here, it would be everything but, anything but. It's very interesting but I think Canadians are now becoming the leaders in talking about culture because it's so much more comfortable. In the work that we do, we always forefront the issues facing marginalized women: Aboriginal women, women of colour, immigrant/refugee women, women who are differently situated because of sexuality, because of disability/ability issues. So that is always there in the analysis and that's not the case across the board. Certainly in the work we do, we make a sustained effort to do it so even when we look at the connections

between eating disorders and violence, we look at state level violence, we look at the impact of marginalization, we look at the impact of homophobia and how that comes across. And we try and tease out those power relations that are so packaged and so tight together that they don't come across. But it's the compounding of racism, with sexism, with homophobia, with classism. That's the key. It's not **just** gender and it's not **just** race. It's where they connect and how they connect. That's what we try to figure in.

[Dr. Nelson also responds.] Just another point on that, one of my other hats is Diversity and Equality in Justice and I think that we have to look very closely at the hidden forms of racism, systemic discrimination, adverse affects discrimination, and we have to look very closely at the decision points in the justice system and which ones are disproportionately impacting certain groups and how to address that. And that's one of the things that we're, I think, starting to do and being taken more seriously in doing it.

[Dr. Jiwani responds.] I just want to add to that is that we tend to look at violence just as physical violence firstly - battery - and secondly, we tend to look at it as gender based. But we don't look at racism as a form of violence, we don't look at homophobia as a form of violence, and we don't look at the whole ability/ableism as a form of violence in term of what its impact is and how it completely eliminates or kills the sense of self, the dignity of self within. I keep going back to Martin Luther King to talk about how the violation of the self is the most awful and worst form of violence that there is.

In that recent study that Dr. Nelson mentioned in the Kamloops, Prince George, and Kelowna areas, what percentage of cases were there where parents were getting their own kids involved in sexual exploitation? And once you discovered this, what prevention and intervention was done?

I probably shouldn't have mentioned that study because that wasn't part of our Working Group and although I was on the advisory board, I don't have the answer. Is someone here from McCreery?

Yes, I'm from McCreery. It was a questionnaire as opposed to an interview, and we asked the question on who were the perpetrators of sexual abuse and what did surprise us is only 18% of the young people identified parents. Which was a bit of a surprise because federally the assumption is made that the abuse is happening from the parents.

*This is about the parents who get the children **into** commercial sexual exploitation.*

As a result, what kind of prevention and intervention was put into place? What was the name of your society?

Actually, there's a sample copy on the resource list - it's *Our Kids Too*. We've never actually asked the question around who got them involved in the sex trade. We did ask young people their ideas around services that would be helpful and what came out of that was housing and shelters, alcohol and drug services, and education and job skills.

[Dr. Jiwani.] Can I just respond to that? Especially given last night's talk - I don't know how many of you were there - but the remark about irresponsible parenting. I can't help but say one thing which is that in this society, compared to the other societies that I'm familiar with, parents have an enormous role. It's like everything gets dumped on them and they're made responsible for everything. And I know many parents whose daughters have gotten into the trade who did everything they could. So I feel very uncomfortable about this and I also feel very uncomfortable about one thing which I think really underlines, again, this whole structural issue, which is how is it that a foster mom can get up to \$800 to look after a foster child when a woman cannot get that money to look after her own child? Where is the justice in that? Where are we even acknowledging what goes into bringing up a child, into the work of socialization? How are we rewarding that? We're not. [Someone advises the amount foster parents receive for a child] \$2,415. It's very interesting because the landing fee in this country for an immigrant or a refugee who comes in is about \$2,000. So there's major monies going somewhere but they ain't going into detox centres, and they ain't going into gender specific shelters.

It's not so much a question as issues I wanted to raise with the Attorney General. When you're talking about government services and then you allude to programming specific to First Nations in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, well outside of Ontario, BC has the highest population of First Nations. We also, in BC, have a lot of cultural diversity amongst all the nations in addition to all the differences between the rural and the urban communities. So I would also speak to some of the issues that Dr. Jiwani related to. Aboriginal people here in this country were subjected to foreign invasion and occupation and genocide for the last 500 years so is it really any surprise that, again, Aboriginal people are over-represented in the sex trade industry. So when you go back to your Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution Dr. Nelson, perhaps you could raise some of those issues with some of those leaders. And I would also suggest that you actively involve the Aboriginal and First Nations government in that Working Group and in developing those strategies, not as some kind of token consultants or we'll continue having the same, sad stories where the governments are producing these strategies that, time and time again, fail.

I think there was a misunderstanding there. Actually I said British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and I, with reluctance, left out Alberta because I know there's some serious issues there too. The Working Group did talk with quite a few people from Aboriginal communities, and as I said, it's a priority to get those issues to the forefront. We know it's very serious and we're doing what we can.

[Dr. Jiwani.] And actually, the point that I made was precisely that. That what goes on in other parts of the world is going on here. That there are major connections between intra-national and international issues around the sex trade.

Film Presentation: Stolen Lives

Lori Roth

Filmmaker

Actually, it's Shona Miko who I wish was here. She's the director of the film and it is really an auteur's film. It was her work and her months and months on the street with this project. She just moved to Bowen Island and it's moving day for her. So my apologies on her behalf for her not being here. I'm one of the producers of the film. We're running out of time. I was hoping that there would be time for questions after. If anybody has any questions or comments after the film when we're across the street, this is Dan Nugent, he's one of the subjects in our film and I'm really pleased to have him here today. *Stolen Lives: Children in the Sex Trade* took 2½ years to make. As you can imagine, it's not a film that a lot of people wanted to put money into but we're very proud of it and I hope it's as meaningful for you as it was for us. So without any further ado.

Afternoon Panel: Local Perspectives on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

Diane Sowden

Executive Director, Children of the Street Society

Thank you very much and especially to the Vancouver Coalition for Children and Youth for inviting me. I am the Executive Director of the Children of the Street Society and as the Executive Director, I am really pleased to see what's happening in this province. We have really gone a long way as far as public awareness and education. We still have a long way to go but we're definitely going in the right direction. It's because the community is pulling together now and understanding the issues. There's so many things we can do on all levels of government: the municipal, the provincial and the federal. But there's still a lot of work to be done.

One of the things I would like to address is we seem to be losing a lot of focus on supporting the families of a young person that does end up in the sex trade. I'm speaking from experience. I have a daughter who is on the street in Vancouver. She's been there for six years and I've been involved with different focus groups of parents around the province and there are a lot of parents that do care. And there are a lot of parents that just don't know how to reach out, where to reach out. And there are also a lot of parents who are feeling a lot of blame and nobody speaks out when they feel that they're the ones who are going to be blamed for the problem. What I'd like to see is more support for the families and by supporting the family, you're supporting the youth.

In the six years that my daughter has been on the street, she has had ten probation officers, more than that when it comes to social workers. She's been placed in several group homes, foster homes, ICCR, a plea home, and she is labelled as a service-resistant youth. As she AWOLs every time, the systems all break down for her and for the family. The only people that have actually stuck with her throughout the whole six years has been her family, and today I'm probably the only one in this province who knows where she is. I got a letter from her - because she's taken herself out of province - and she stated in her letter the only thing that stopped her from overdosing on purpose (she's a heroin addict now) is the fact that she knew at any time, she could pick up the phone, phone home, and there'd be a familiar voice there that she could just talk fluff, nothing heavy. And she knew at the end of the conversation it would be, "We love you. Take care of yourself."

So it's very hurtful and harmful to the family to hear over and over again that the families are always to blame. In our community in Coquitlam, we had a situation of a family which staged a home invasion and I'm sure everyone saw it. I read things in the *Province* like, "The parents were assholes." You talked to people and, "These parents are crazy. No wonder their kid is involved in drugs and in the sex trade." I personally know the family because we are a support for families in our area, and that family was reaching out for

help for a long time. And if they're not going to get the help from the service providers and from the community, they're going to take action which is not necessarily the right action. It's an emotional action, it's out of desperation and it puts everybody in danger. If they'd had the support as a family, maybe they wouldn't have made a decision that wasn't the right decision at that point.

You've got to remember that when you have a parent phone you, as a service provider please don't say, "There's nothing we can do." That seems to be the answer we get most of the time. Maybe there isn't anything you can do as a service provider to intervene with what's happening with that young person at that time. But how about asking, "What can we do to help the rest of your family cope through this right now and support you, keep you healthy, so we can get your child home to a healthy family?" That's supposed to be the game plan, to get families back together. The impact that it has on the youth on the street to have everyone say, "Your family is crap," is also damaging to that young person. That's their family!

And it also does damage to the other siblings in the household. My son was in grade eight, 13 years old, when his sister went out on the street. She was only in grade seven. He wanted to quit school because of the harassment he got at school and the judgmental comments that were made toward him by other students and from teachers. And right up to when he was 16 - because I was speaking out in the community and it was known by the police that my child was on the street - when he was driving and got pulled over, the first reaction he got was, "Oh, you're a Sowden." What kind of damage are we doing to the family unit by being so judgmental? We need to support them so that parents won't do things in desperation.

Also, a lot of parents shut down. If we don't have the support, we go into deep depression and we can't do what's right to keep the household going so we have a healthy family for when our child does come home. Because that is the plan and hope we all have. I know one day my daughter is going to come home. And to the parents, one thing I would like to ask is please support your child when they're out there. When my daughter phones home, she knows she's going to hear a voice that cares. She also knows we're there in crisis. My husband and I have picked her up any time she's needed medical help. She's been raped, beaten. We've been in most of the trick pads probably, in Vancouver. So I really think that we have to stop blaming all the time. There are families that are dysfunctional. There are families that are abusive. There are kids that should not go back into their homes. But don't just judge every phone call that you get, that that's the case. And try and realize that this is someone's daughter and someone does care. Thank you.

[Detective Noreen Waters](#)

Coordinated Law Enforcement Unit (CLEU)

Good afternoon. It's quite something to follow all of the speeches that have gone on today and all of the workshops and for everyone that has come forward with information about

the abuses and what's going on on the street and how people are trying to look after children and take care of them and stop the abuse or stop them from getting drawn away from home. And what I'm going to talk about is just a little bit about the Internet because people forget about that area when it comes to children and children being lured.

How many people here have home computers? How many are on the Internet? How many have children? How many of you have your children on the Internet? Not as many. How many of you know what your children are doing when they're on the Internet? There's a pretty good show of hands there. And who they're talking to? That's part of it - the chat rooms. One of the biggest areas where kids get involved is in the chat rooms. It's because it's such an easy area, particularly for pedophiles or people who have a sexual interest in children, or even pimps, to lure a child. And what it's done for a pedophile, instead of them having access to children in their own neighbourhood or down the street in their own city, it's given them access to children around the world.

I do child pornography investigations, or prohibited adult material. Plus, we do the Internet as well and my partner, Bruce Hedridge, is the Internet investigator. And what we've found is that the number of cases of children being contacted through the Internet is becoming more commonplace. Within the last two weeks I got a call from an RCMP officer who works in northern BC, who was very concerned by three contacts of young girls between the ages of 14 and 20. These are vulnerable young girls who are within a service organization. The organization is teaching them about computers and helping them get around the Internet so that they can understand things and get jobs. And they've gotten involved in chat rooms. One girl who's 14 years old was actually in a chat room with a fellow who's down in the US, who's much older than her. What he's doing is offering to send her a bus ticket to travel down to stay with him in the US. He's also sending her pictures of what he says is his penis - god knows if it's his or somebody else's! - and sending her pictures saying he looks like a movie star.

So there are all these lures. And what people don't know is you can groom somebody on the Internet just as easily as if you spend the time talking to them. What you don't understand is that a child looks at a computer and sees a computer screen and they don't see a person. They don't see someone who is a threat to them. You can't warn them in the same manner that you do, "Don't talk to strangers on the street." They're looking at a computer screen, they're talking to somebody over a long period of time, weeks, months, and to them, all of a sudden it's a friend. It's "somebody who understands me."

There were two other cases up north where a 20-year-old woman was on the Internet and thought she was talking to somebody who was quite a distance away. She gave out her address, her phone number, and other details about herself. This person showed up at her door and she was terrified. Now she's very scared because he's sending e-mail saying he can imagine her where she's sitting in her home and that he knows where she lives. We're trying to tell children not to give out that information but we have to educate all of us that you don't give that kind of information out over the Internet.

We also had a case where a 12-year-old boy up in the Interior was corresponding with what he thought was another 12-year-old boy in the US in a child's chat room. What it turned out to be was a 59-year-old man and what he did was he started threatening the boy. He got the boy to purchase a bus ticket to meet him in the US. He also got him to take jewellery from his mom and also get his father's PIN number for his ATM card. The boy was all packed and ready to leave and his father saw the boy going out the door and asked him, "Where are you going?" "Oh, I'm going to go and stay with my friend." And his father said to him, "I'll drive you there. It's cold." "Oh, no, no, no." And the father started to realize there was something not quite right and the boy then broke down and told his father. The father went up to the computer and saw all the messages. He got in touch with the US authorities initially and told them. They actually did surveillance on this man and followed him to the bus station in Seattle where he was going to pick up this child. He was arrested and charged. What we're saying is that people don't understand that someone can pose as a different person. This was somebody who was pretending to be another 12-year-old child when, in fact, it was an older man. Or they can pretend to be anyone. They can pretend to be a woman, they can pretend to be any number of things and you have to understand that it gives a form of anonymity to these people in relation to luring children.

It's not only just the luring of children or for pedophiles or for sexual contact in that manner. It's also a growing area for pimps to lure children. There was also a case - it's actually before the courts so I don't want to say too much - where a man thought that he was purchasing sex from an 11-year-old girl. And he hooked up with my partner who he thought was going to give him access to the child. He actually met with a police officer and paid \$300 to have sex with what he thought was going to be the 11-year-old girl. He brought along a little goody bag of gifts, etc. This is what's happening. They are actually soliciting children or prostitutes or whoever through the Internet.

The Internet has many positive things for you to search for for kids, for learning, for everything. But there is a whole area of the Internet where you have to be aware and have to be able to tell children or you as young people, that you have to be very cautious when going on the Internet, and who you're speaking to, and what information you're giving out over the Internet.

There's an organization called Cyveillance Incorporated in the US and they did an audit of 75,000 Web pages that have pornographic material on them. That's how many Web pages that have been set up out there. Of those 75,000 pages, they found that 19,000 contained 120 of the most commonly searched for words such as *Disney* and *Nintendo*. So your child can go on there and they're querying *Mickey Mouse*, and they're immediately linked to a pornography Web page. They can browse on what they call *teaser* pages and they can look at that material. So they're also randomly searching Web pages for words that are searched for every week, the words that are the most commonly searched. And then they add those to their site. So your child can query just common little words that are very benign and be linked to a porn sight.

There's also a search engine that has a link to an adult site. That adult site has a warning,

"If you're under 21, don't go further." But a kid's going to look at that and say, "I want to see what's out there," and it will link you to some material that even contains bestiality, urination, defecation, or anything that is hard-core pornography. Any child can gain access to it. Right now there are no controls governing what is on the Internet or what service providers should do. In the US, they have passed laws in relation to luring children on the Internet. They've also passed a law recently in regard to harassing e-mail. So that is another area where they're trying to protect children and people who are getting pornographic material sent to them that they haven't asked for, just through e-mail.

Are you aware of *Camel* cigarettes where they had this campaign about *Joe Camel*? Everybody was up in arms about it because it was luring kids to start smoking. The pornography Web pages or sites are doing the same thing by having these *teaser* pages or links through *Disney*, *Nintendo*, or through some of these other words that the kids will be drawn to. So there's that whole area that is really of concern to us, and should be of concern to parents. In particular, don't give out information and parents need to be aware of what their children are doing on the Internet.

I'll just tell you a couple of safety things that are in place right now that are available for parents in relation to children on the Internet. Some of the ones that are available, such as *Net Nanny* and these types of programs, anything that you use is positive. But any child that is a little bit computer literate can get around a lot of those safeguards and find the material. And a lot of it is curiosity for these kids. They want to see it. But it gives them material that children really shouldn't be looking at. Nor should adults. The material is so egregious that is being made available to them.

One of the things I thought was unusual is that there was an article in the *Sun* about a US-based animal rights group which was seeking to outlaw bestiality. "They had launched a campaign to outlaw sexual abuse of animals amid a wealth of Internet sites aimed at people who practice it. The group is concerned particularly that the computer images and instructions are readily available to children." How often do we actually see where people go out there and say, "I want to outlaw abuse of children? I don't want to see that on the Internet any more." You're all aware of what's going on in court and one of the things we want to do is to protect children as well. Yes, people always get up in arms about any abuse of an animal. But let's treat children in the same way that we do animals.

There is a pamphlet available for anyone who's interested. This is from the Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in Washington, D.C. It's an excellent pamphlet. It's called *Child Safety on the Information Highway*. You can phone them. They have been sending out 50 copies free of charge or they're 20 cents a copy after that and they're well worth it. Their number is 1-800-843-5678. The last page has a little tear-out that a child can put on the computer which says, "My rules for on-line safety." Now this is for kids that will listen and who will want to do this and with parents who will be involved. But there are lots of vulnerable kids out there that aren't getting that same protection. So we have to be diligent in letting people know that these things are out there and even with you, as workers, if you know kids are on the Internet, be aware of what they may be linking on to.

There's also a CD-ROM game for the kids and also print material within the Ministry of Education and a company called *Live Wires*. I and a number of others are on a committee in which the material is going to be in the schools in the fall. It's for teachers, for students, and for parents and it's a whole education package. There's also another video that's just been put out by Safeco Insurance Company in the US. You can contact me at CLEU and we can let you know the company. It's excellent. It's very well done for younger kids, in the way the video has been put together, warning them about what stuff to give out over the Internet. It's good for parents as well because it goes to the father giving out information as well. My number at CLEU is 660-6487.

If I can leave you with one thing, just understand that there is a whole other medium out there now where children are being lured, are being contacted, and can be drawn away and into prostitution and sexual abuse. And that's through the Internet. Thank you for your time.

[Tia Eagles-Claw](#)

Boys R Us (a self help resource centre for boys and transgendered people working in the sex trade)

From listening to all of the speakers, most of what I want to say has already been said. So I'll tell you a little bit about my organization. *Boys R Us* is a self-help drop-in centre for sex trade workers. We have our own programs and support each other with our own support services. Our own ex-sex trade workers have training as counsellors, as advocates, and as social workers. We do our own training and we help out other people that are still in the sex trade. For those who do want to get out of the sex trade and back into education, back into job training, back into any type of field, we're there to assist them. I've been doing this now for 4½ years, helping prostitutes to get off the street, especially young kids who are new to the strip. We show them that they can be better than that and that they're smart and they're educated and they can have a healthy lifestyle without being in the sex trade. I've been in it for 14 years and it's not a healthy life to get into and it can be very rough.

For the last 3½ of the 4½ years that I've been doing this type of work, I've been able to help 14 youths (aged from 13, 15, 16) that were going to get into the sex trade. I was able to stop them from getting into the sex trade, to stop them from being prostitutes and to get them back into school, to get them back into job training. Eight of them have graduated with high honours and 6 of them have jobs. And of all these duties that I do, I am also one of the high mothers of the street. There have been lots of services provided for male sex trade workers and the trans-gendered community. We have our own law system, we have our own support system which consists of grandmothers, mothers, and elders that do all the work and who form the family structures within our own community. We help each other out. And next November 12th I'll be a grandmother and I'm not looking forward to it!

I've been sitting here listening to the presentations and I've gone to very few conferences where I've been asked to speak. I can say that at this conference, from everything that I've seen and everything that I've heard, I'm glad to see there's a lot of participation by the youth. The voices of the youth are being heard and being well respected. For all the years that I have been involved in this type of field, I've seen services and proposals come and go or that have failed, and services that are being given today. We have a lot of some types of services and we need more services added to it, some decreased, and some worked on more. And *Boys R Us*, and those of us that are the mothers of the street and those of us that do have the training and the qualifications, we came up with an application form that we want to give to the government. It's an application for our own building and our own services that will provide every variety of service that is needed. It will provide youth and the various people of the street with emergency hostels, food bank, job training, social work, advocacy, education, job placements, housing, and every type of work all in one building. This is a proposal that we came up with and there are a lot of us who are willing to do all the work for it on a voluntary basis, since we've been doing it for many years.

And last but not least, since I have seen services come and go over my years, I would just like to say that everyone who does work with the government or organizations and who wants to make a difference for youth in the sex trade or to get people off the street, it's best to put the differences aside and coincide with these youth because we're the ones that are out there. We're the ones who know what works, we're the ones who know what doesn't work and we know what needs to be added on to your services. So work alongside us and we can go a long way and make a passageway for youth today so we can have a smooth and healthier future tomorrow. Thank you.

[Sandy Cunningham](#)

Crown Counsel for the Provincial Prostitution Unit

Good afternoon. It's very encouraging to see so many interested faces on a relatively sunny Saturday afternoon. I've been asked to say a few words about the role of the criminal law in our efforts to address the sexual exploitation of children and youth here in Canada. I'm going to talk briefly about the laws in Canada that relate to prostitution generally, and the sexual exploitation of children and youth specifically. Law can be very dry so I'll try to speak as little legalese as possible.

I think it's important to stress at the outset that the enforcement of these laws is just one tool in our attempts to protect young people from sexual exploitation and the dangers inherent in life on the streets. As you've heard over the course of the last two days, knowing how young people are targeted for sexual exploitation and why they become involved can be far more effective in preventing youth from being drawn into prostitution in the first place. We need to know what we can do to help ensure that our children don't find themselves in a position where we have to rely on the criminal law to protect them. For every pimp or john that is arrested and charged, there is at least one child whose life

has already been dramatically affected by sexual exploitation. Prevention is the best protection.

When we talk about sexual exploitation, we use that phrase to characterize what happens to children and youth who get involved in prostitution. Instead of thinking about prostitution as a victimless crime or something kids choose to get involved in, we think about it as exploitation: adults using kids, manipulating them for their own purposes. When I talk about children, I'm referring to those under the age of 18. Legally defined, prostitution is the act of offering one's body to another for money or its equivalent, the exchange of sexual services for money or other consideration. In law, *consideration* doesn't have to be money - it can be food, shelter, clothing, drugs, a ride home or anything else of value. Sexual services, legally speaking, isn't just intercourse. It's any act that is sexually stimulating to the customer.

It isn't illegal under our criminal law to be a prostitute *per se*. The practice of prostitution, that is the exchange of sexual services for consideration, regardless of age or gender, is not an offence under Canadian law. However, just about everything related to prostitution is. For example, although it isn't an offence to be a prostitute, it is a crime to keep a place for the purpose of engaging in prostitution. Even though it isn't an offence to engage in prostitution, it is a crime to communicate in a public place, for the purpose of engaging in prostitution.

I'd like to now focus on the criminal laws that relate to the children and youth who get drawn into prostitution, those offences that target the pimps who recruit children into prostitution, and the customers or johns who sexually exploit them. Until very recently, the criminal law didn't pay very much attention to the sexual exploitation of children. Our criminal law didn't recognize that children, and far too often very young children, were being used and abused by adults for their own purposes. Historically, prostitution was seen as a victimless crime. They were often invisible crimes. Children didn't complain. They were often non-co-operative witnesses and there wasn't any information available about how widespread the problem was. It wasn't until 1984 and the publication of a report called the *Badgley Report*, that we began to understand the scope and breadth of the problem of sexual exploitation and the need to enact specific criminal offences to target those who would sexually exploit children. That report led to the enactment of 212 (4) and I understand the Attorney General spoke about that earlier so I won't dwell on it. But that offence is aimed specifically at those customers seeking to obtain the sexual services of persons under the age of 18. And as recently amended, and it's effective today, it is an offence to communicate with any person for the purpose of obtaining or attempting to obtain, for consideration, the sexual services of a person under the age of 18. It's an indictable offence. That's the most serious of our offences under the criminal law, punishable upon conviction to a maximum of 5 years.

One of the challenges of enforcing Section 212 (4) is to figure out ways to effectively prosecute without requiring the child or youth to testify, or to minimize the trauma of testifying for children and youth. The criminal law also seeks to protect children from sexual exploitation by adults by making it illegal for a person 16 years or older to engage

in sexual activity with a child under the age of 14, even if they consent. And I understand the Attorney General talked about that earlier as well. So I'll basically just tell you what it means when you put those two laws together, Section 212 (4) and the age of consent.

What it means in the context of the sexual exploitation of children and youth is that if someone 16 years or older has sex with consent with a child under 14, they can be charged with the serious criminal offences of sexual assault, sexual interference, or sexual touching. If any consideration is exchanged, they can also be charged under Section 212 (4). However, if a person 16 years or older has sex with consent with a child aged 14 years or older, the only offence that can apply is Section 212 (4). It's not illegal to have sex with children 14 years or older. It's just illegal to pay for it.

Since the publication of the *Badgley Report*, there have been other additions to the criminal law which specifically target those pimps who would sexually exploit children. The criminal justice system has long recognized just how dangerous pimps are and they've been referred by judges across Canada as lepers, parasites, and personifying abusive and exploitative behaviour. It has always been a serious criminal offence to recruit or try and recruit someone into prostitution either in or out of Canada, to live off the avails - the earnings - of prostitution, or to exercise control or influence over a person by helping them or compelling them to engage in prostitution.

In addition to these offences, there's now also an offence which specifically deals with the pimp who lives on the avails or earnings of prostitution of a person under the age of 18. And most recently, in June of 1997, Parliament added a new criminal offence designed specifically to deal with the pimp who uses and abuses those under 18 in prostitution. Section 212 (2.1) is called the aggravated pimping section and under this Section, anyone living on the avails of prostitution of a person under the age of 18 who helps or compels that person to engage in prostitution, and uses or threatens violence to that person, is liable upon conviction to a minimum sentence of 5 years. There are very few sections in the *Criminal Code* which impose a minimum sentence on conviction. So this is an indication of what a serious offence this is.

That's a very general outline of the laws that relate to prostitution and the sexual exploitation of youth. I haven't referred to the child pornography laws and I'm not going to do that. These laws are only effective tools if we can enforce them successfully. Convicting pimps and johns who physically and sexually assault children and/or sexually exploit them can send a powerful message that we will not tolerate sexual exploitation of children. However, in order to arrest those who sexually exploit children, we need evidence that a criminal offence has been committed. We need witnesses who are prepared to tell the police what happened to them or what they saw or heard. Getting the necessary evidence to arrest a pimp or john is one of the hardest jobs a police officer has. Children involved in prostitution are scared of their pimps who threaten and often assault them to maintain control over them. They are fearful of authority and alienated often from mainstream society. They often have drug or alcohol problems. They are afraid of retaliation if they speak to police. It's very difficult for children involved in prostitution to come forward and make a statement to the police.

A sexually exploited child or youth who has taken the huge step of reporting abuse or exploitation to anyone in an authority position, needs all the support a community can muster. It is one thing to leave the street and prostitution. It is quite another to make a statement to the police about it, and to testify in court about it. Strong and consistent support from the police, the community, family, friends and those involved in child protection and the criminal justice system is essential if sexually exploited children and youth are to successfully leave the sex trade and/or testify in court against those who have exploited them. Thank you.

[Michael Cook](#)

Program Community Development Officer, Urban Native Youth Association

This is a very short speech. I was thinking that there are so many things to look at and think about and trying to find a direction to give this discussion was very difficult. But I've been thinking about what we've been recently seeing on television at Columbine High School in Colorado where 15 youths died in that shooting. It certainly is a tragedy and so it should be seen to be. But what about the number of Aboriginal children and youth in our country that are slowly killing themselves or who are dying at the hands of other people as a result of sexual exploitation and being involved in the sex trade?

I want to pick up on a point that Cherry made last night. She talked about zero tolerance; 100% zero tolerance around sexual exploitation of children and youth in our country and more so within the Aboriginal community. We at Urban Native Youth see, ongoing, young people who come to us who have survived the sex trade and want to move on with their lives. But I also think about why is it that our community is so vulnerable? Why is it that our children are being recruited into the sex trade? Why is it that we have a vulnerable community? And I don't think that we have a real understanding of the impact of residential schools. Dr. Wade talked about that last night as well. And I don't think we're going to have a real understanding of what the residential schools have done to our communities.

The point I want to make is that some of the survivors of residential schools are perpetrators of sexual abuse of our children and they are some of our leaders within our community. If we want 100% zero tolerance, we need to begin to look at ourselves within our own communities. Our children leave reserves and come to the cities and we end up seeing them at our organization. We need to begin to examine in our own community, within the Aboriginal community, the perpetration of sexual abuse and ultimately children ending up on the streets, our children ending up on the streets as well as the perpetrators that take advantage of our young people. I know recently I heard about some girls from Merritt who were recruited and they were brought to Vancouver and put on the streets. They were picked up by the police and the band had to come down and get them. So as far away as Merritt, we're seeing our young people being brought to the city to be put on the streets.

But I also hear stories of young men and women who have come from reserve communities who have been sexually abused. Their father is a chief, the chief is prominent in the community and the child will not come forward because of who their father is within the community. We need to begin to break the silence within our communities because nobody's talking about the fact that there is an ongoing perpetration of sexual abuse within the communities ultimately impacting our young people and as a result, are on the streets, and recruited, and vulnerable. And we see them in our organization.

I want zero tolerance. I would like to work myself out of a job. I don't want to have to deal with this. But we need zero tolerance. And what does that mean? We need to begin to have open discussions about why our children are on the streets, why our children are vulnerable to perpetrators.

So that's what I'm calling for. Zero tolerance.

[Cheryl MacKinnon](#)

Co-founder of the Kid Friendly! Society of BC, and the Coordinator of the BC Pilot Project - *Stolen Innocence*

Wow. I'm sitting here thinking about everything that we've talked about over the evening last night and everything today and Michael, I feel just like you. Everything has changed in what I was going to say so I have taken a few deep breaths to get back on track here with what the *Stolen Innocence* campaign is all about. I've been very fortunate in the last few months to meet some tremendous individuals who are involved in the front-line with this issue. I came in through another avenue and really, I'm just astounded at the level of commitment to make a difference and to find a solution and that's what the *Stolen Innocence* campaign is about, in a different vein.

I have some of my colleagues here at the conference, with the *Stolen Innocence* campaign and I must say, on behalf of all of us, we've been disappointed in the turnout and the support from the business community at this point in time. But we're hoping, based on what I'm going to tell you about what the *Stolen Innocence* campaign is about, that we will take little steps and little bites and BC will be the first province in our country to take a positive step forward in educating the corporate and business community, predominantly through travellers, that this is a very real issue. And as Dr. Fry alluded to earlier today in her speech, we have to make a difference, and we have to start caring, and we have to show that we are committed to the project.

So, a little bit about *Stolen Innocence*. It is a project that is designed to work with the tourism industry, primarily with the airlines and travel agents and front-line workers in hotels and travel agencies, taxi companies and the travelling public. Basically, those that utilize these services, which could be any one of us. We want to educate them on the issue, the severity of it in our province as well as our country, and to educate them on the

law that has just been passed. It's a huge task and one that we've been working on as a national committee for just up to two years to even get the pieces together on how we would take this out to the community to work with the public, to let them know about the issue. And we have been working very diligently on the BC Pilot for the last 5½ months. I was asked, to coordinate the efforts for the *Stolen Innocence* campaign because the tourism industry can actually be a very positive influence in educating everyone about the issue.

So some of the components of our program - we are just working right now with a major ad agency to perform an analysis involving everyone - are some of the people that you've heard throughout the last day and a half, but in particular, with our youth who have been involved in street work. Cherry Kingsley is our youth advocate in that area. And we have Noreen [Waters] who has already spoken, along with several others who are here. We're all coming together to work with an ad agency to put together some key elements that can be distributed publicly. It will involve in-flight vignettes so that when people are travelling on any of our air carriers within Canada following the safety video, they will see the *Stolen Innocence* ad on the crime of the commercial exploitation of children. We're very excited about that because it will make a tremendous difference within our marketplace. We'll also be working with travel agents, including the international travel group, Women in Travel. We're working now to design a brochure that will be given to every single traveller and it will also be distributed through Canada customs when you're paying your Airport Improvement Tax. We want to create an awareness that the issue exists and that we have to face up to it.

So these are some of the key elements with those two being very strategic as we'll reach the masses. Then as it follows through down into the tourism industry at a different level, when you're checking into hotels, you will be given an information package as well. Again, a simple, clear, concise brochure that will talk about the repercussions of being involved in this. It's a huge task and we have decided to take this particular area to concentrate on because it can involve a large group of the public.

So I am very, very pleased to tell you that we are working together and as a result of this conference, there will be a meeting put together with many of the youth as well as some of the key speakers who will help the agency design the pieces, and when we convene, once again, we will actually have the materials to share with you. That will be in the very near future rather than later.

Thank you.

Question Period

This is for Cheryl. Because Canada is French and English and you talk about tourism, is that going to be in different languages?

Excellent question. Absolutely. As I've been part of the conference in putting it together and running around, as well as a speaker, I left out a few key points. But absolutely. Everything is bilingual and it will actually be in several different languages to address all of the cultures within our country. So we will definitely, of course, respect our bilingual aspect but we are also having it translated into about 12 different languages.

A question for Noreen [Waters] about the Internet. When you're on the Internet and you look up something and you come up with something that you didn't want to see, or a chat room for instance, when you come across someone who's obviously scoping out the kids, what do you do? I spend a lot of time on the Net and I don't know what to do. Do I call 911 and say, "Hi."

The problem is that there are not a lot of agencies dealing with the Internet because the technology has gotten far ahead of policing and people who are able to do this. And there's a very small part of the policing community that deals with it. Phone us and if we can't do it, we'll know who to refer it to. So just call that number 660-6487 and I'll give it to my partner and we'll go from there. We'll see what we can do for you. If we can't deal with it, we'll know who we can refer you to. There are some people out there that are very, very good at hiding themselves and some that we'll never find. But if they're not, we'll be able to.

What was the 1-800 number for?

It's actually for the pamphlet, *Child Safety on the Information Highway*. 1-800-843-5678.

Diane [Sowden], I very much share your courage and your pain in what you said about your family. I'm wondering if your structure is bringing in some of the minorities who have the same problem? Many times our minority groups, because of the feelings of shame or whatever the culture may be, are not prepared to face the situation and what they will do is drive away their unfortunate child. But if there are structures like the one you have put in place, and if you can bring in some of these families, you will be doing the best service. And if there's anything we can do to help, we'd be quite prepared to do that.

We haven't had a lot of people call us from different minorities. We do have a couple of people on our board. We have a woman that is from the Native community. We have a man that is from the Black community. And we have an Asian woman. So there is some contact there but what you stated was true. We don't get a lot of calls from different races or nationalities. Most of the calls we get are from Caucasians in the Tri-City area.

So you've just identified a big gap.

Yes, definitely.

And it's culture and sometimes religion.

Yes, religious, yes.

One of the problems with zero tolerance, is that feasible? That us, as a society, say, that's it, zero tolerance?

This is for Noreen Waters. What penalties do exist now if they do get caught on the Net procuring kids?

It's very, very little. There was a case out of Ontario where a man was corresponding with a young girl. She was 12 when it started. She went to him, had sex with him in his car. When it went to court, he got a conditional sentence. They said that she was almost 14 at the last occurrence so she was almost at the age of consent. And the child had fallen in love with this man who was much, much older than her. So she was reluctant to say too much although she did go into all the details of what had occurred. And he got a conditional sentence and that was all that he got for this. He had lured this girl through the Internet when she was 12 and had engaged in sex with her and that's all he got as far as sentencing.

[Sandy Cunningham.] What I should tell you is that sentences, unless there is a minimum imposed - you remember I was telling you about this minimum sentences for aggravated pimping - unless there's a minimum imposed, a sentence really depends on a great number of factors, all sorts of different factors. And a judge who sentences someone who is convicted for a pimping offence, is bound usually only by previous decisions in case law and is bound by law to take into account the unique features of each case. So sentences do not reflect, hardly ever, what the community thinks should be imposed. That's just a reality.

But shouldn't it be the will of the people? If we don't want this and we have the majority to rule this, then we've got to change the laws.

[Sandy Cunningham.] Well the law that was enacted in June of 1997 that put in a minimum sentence is an example of that. That's Parliament saying that if you recruit and keep a kid under the age of 18 in prostitution and we can convict you, you're going to do a minimum of 5 years.

The key word, if we can convict you. Then we need the kids to testify.

[Sandy Cunningham.] You don't need just the kids. You need the kids and anybody else in the community who saw or heard anything to come forward.

[Noreen Waters.] You need a rock-solid case in order for them to get 5 years.

[Sandy Cunningham.] Yes, the Crown has to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt. That's our criminal justice system.

Noreen [Waters], the police know that these guys are pimping. They know the whole situation. They see it right then and there. They see new cars they're driving. So it's known that they're doing that. So why can't they just make an arrest?

What she's saying is you have to have the evidence. And if you know it without having the child come forward, you know the person's driving around, they've got the money, you've got to be able to say that there's a specific child that they're involved with, that they are pimping that child. You have to have concrete evidence. It's frustrating for us. We have cases of people that are involved in child pornography, we know they are, but we have to have the evidence that they either have it in their possession, that somebody has given us the information that they know they have it. But it's a very difficult thing. Not just knowing or having a hunch. You have to have other evidence to be able to charge them and to put them through to court. But it's frustrating, I know.

What we, as a society, are telling youth is that by following this law it's okay for these guys to do this, that we can't do anything about it. But are we telling these youths that it's wrong? Is it right to do this as a society? We teach children, they follow us as a society and we have to start changing the way the law works and the way we explain it to the youth.

This is for Kid Friendly! We had a rally in Merritt last week and had a wonderful turnout. And one of the things that came out of a meeting before that was we have I don't know how many million visitors go through the Coquihalla every year. Those big signs say nothing all through the summer about weather and road conditions basically. Why could we not say "Pimp Free Zone" or "If you need help getting back home, call 1-800." Why can't we use something like that? It's free, just for public awareness and perhaps if we say "Pimp Free Zone" on the signs and they suddenly start believing it.

Excellent point.

Closing Address

Sandy Cooke

Covenant House

If there is one thing that can make a difference about children that are being sexually exploited on the street it has to be the community, all of us collectively and individually. Those of us who have been in the service profession for a long time around this population need help, need support by youth, by the broader public to really make the change. We need zero tolerance, there's no question about that. Those of us who have worked in this field for a long time and who have worked with young people who have either died on the streets or are dying on the streets, know that the reality is that these young people are bought by people in very high power. We know of powerful people in the federal and provincial governments who buy children for sex. And that is a fact. I would love, in my time, to see a class action against these people in power. We, as professionals, know it's hearsay. The young people who would have to come forward to testify don't have the supports to be able to do that. So you, we, collectively can and must make a difference.

I'll quickly say we're Covenant House, we're new on the block. We've been open for 18 months in Vancouver. Covenant House is an international agency which operates from Central America up to Alaska. We'd like to see this not as a first conference but for it to be a building conference, including everyone in this room and outside this room to start developing what can we do collectively. We need new hearts, new brains, new eyes at addressing this issue. So as Covenant House, we will make a commitment to be a co-sponsor of this annually.

Conference Presenters

Renata Aebi is an artist, educator, human rights advocate and community developer. In addition to teaching, Renata has managed outreach youth service programs for street involved youth in Burnaby, New Westminster, the Tri-Cities, and Mission. She currently coordinates the Vancouver Coalition for Children and Youth, a coalition of community-based and government service providers working to improve upon services to children and youth in Vancouver.

Sandy Cooke has worked for over 30 years in the social service field, specializing in high risk/high need youth issues. He recently left the Ministry for Children and Families to take on the role of Executive Director for Covenant House, an international organization designed to provide assistance to street involved and homeless youth.

Sandy Cunningham has been a trial prosecutor for most of her career, both at Vancouver Provincial Court and for the last five years at the Vancouver Supreme Court. She has been Crown Counsel since 1973 and joined the Provincial Prostitution Unit in 1997 as the Crown Counsel representative.

The Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Human Rights, and Immigration. Mr. Dosanjh was first elected a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Vancouver-Kingsway in the 1991 general election and re-elected in 1996. Prior to being raised to the Cabinet, he twice served as Caucus Chair and also chaired the Select Standing Committee on Parliamentary Reform, Ethical Conduct, Standing Orders, and Private Bills. A long time human rights activist, his past community involvements include South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, MOSAIC, Vancouver Multicultural Society, and the BC Civil Liberties Association. In 1977, he helped set up the first farm workers legal information service while he was chair of the Labour Advocacy Research Association.

Tia Eagles-Claw has experienced first hand the hardships associated with living on the streets. Born in Penticton, BC and raised in traditional heritage and customs, Tia moved to Vancouver at a very young age. For the last four years, Tia has worked to help others who are homeless, in poverty, and working in the sex-trade.

Dr. Yasmin Jiwani is the Executive Coordinator of the FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. The Centre is one of five violence research centres which were established in 1992 as a joint initiative between Health Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Dr. Jiwani's doctorate in communication studies from Simon Fraser University focussed on race and its representation in Canadian television news, and more particularly on how the mainstream media maintain cultural/racial hegemony. Over the last five years, Dr. Jiwani has worked with the FREDA Centre to facilitate and conduct participatory action research on violence against women and children. More recently, she completed a study on Rural Women and Violence for the Department of Justice Canada, as well as a study on

Violence Prevention and the Girl Child for the Status of Women Canada.

Cherry Kingsley is co-chair of the International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth. She is an advocate for the rights of children in care as well as for sexually exploited children and youth. In 1996, Ms. Kingsley was invited to address the first World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm, Sweden. Recognizing a critical lack of youth involvement, Kingsley, along with Senator Landon Pearson, spearheaded a Youth Summit held in Victoria, BC in 1998. This international summit brought together sexually exploited youth from the Americas. Ms. Kingsley is currently working on a national program to develop a support network for sexually exploited youth in Canada.

Maria LeRose has earned a reputation as a broadcaster with heart. She completed her university degree in psychology and worked in social services before entering journalism. Maria got her start in television at CKVU, a local Vancouver television station. She started as a host of the daily live television program, *Vancouver Morning*. She then moved on to co-host *Vancouver*, a two-hour live daily magazine program. Since then, Maria has hosted and/or produced programs for the CBC Network and BC Region (radio and television), PBS, CTV Network, Toronto's CITY-TV, and CBC Newsworld.

Cheryl MacKinnon is founder of The Kid Friendly! Society of British Columbia, a marketing initiative she created for kids and families living in or visiting British Columbia. The Society's mandate is to identify and accredit sites and service that are welcoming, safe, and suitable for children, youth and families. A native Vancouverite, Cheryl has spent over twenty years of her professional career in tourism. In addition to her work with Kid Friendly! British Columbia, Cheryl currently is coordinating the BC Pilot Project - Stolen Innocence, a national campaign designed to heighten awareness of the tourism industry and travelling public about the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in Canada.

Dr. Jacquelyn Nelson is Senior Policy Analyst with the Ministry of Attorney General. She currently co-chairs the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution, the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Group on Hate Crime, the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Group on Diversity, Equality and Justice, and is chair of the Ministry of Attorney General Restorative Justice Working Group. In addition, Dr. Nelson is responsible for research and policy development pertaining to prostitution and the sexual exploitation of youth, child pornography, hate crimes, gangs, and integrated justice initiatives.

Brent Parfitt is the Deputy Ombudsman for the Province of BC. Mr. Parfitt was a member of the planning committee for the International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth. He is currently involved in advocating against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth both within Canada and internationally.

Laura Park is a Ph.D. candidate at Carleton University who has been examining the developmentally inappropriate legal strategies used in the courtroom to ensure that child

witnesses appear unreliable. Under the direction of Dr. Edward Renner, for the past four years, Ms. Park has concluded that the Canadian legal system fails justice to the extent that it allows for inappropriate legal tactics to prevent children from providing an accurate and complete testimony.

PIE Theatre Company is Hayley Sinclair, Tarra Jacklin, Michael Halverson and Yoshi, four youths that come from the street or street involved life. Their experiences are woven into a 45-minute play called *I'm All Messed Up*. "Although our play is not based on any particular true story, all the issues and scenarios portrayed happen every day. Our goal is to help educate young people about resources available for a safe route out of an abusive situation."

Lori Roth and Nathan Neumer are producers for *Still Water Pictures Inc.* Dedicated to the exploration of humanitarian issues through documentaries and dramatic films, their most recent drama *Caught in the Net* won a 1997 Best Film Award at the Yorkton Short Film Festival. Their recent production, *Stolen Lives, Children in the Sex Trade* is a compelling documentary about Vancouver's thriving underground industry of child sexual exploitation. This film is written and directed by Shona Miko with cinematography by Steven Miko.

Diane Sowden is co-founder and volunteer Executive Director of the Children of the Street Society. She has been instrumental in developing strategies to address child exploitation issues. Ms. Sowden's work with and on behalf of parents has played a significant role in originally bringing the need for secure care to the attention of the Ministry for Children and Families. Her society provides community education to parents, schools, counsellors, service providers, youths, and public forums.

Dr. Jennifer Wade is a writer, educator and human rights advocate. She has been associated with Amnesty International since its beginnings in London in 1961, and was a founding member of Amnesty International in Vancouver in 1974. Dr. Wade has worked as a civil rights activist in the United States and for refugee rights here in Canada. In recent years she has served on both the Vancouver and National Board of the Elizabeth Fry Society, as well as working on reforms to the foster care system. In 1994, Dr. Wade received the United Nations Association, Renate Shearer Award for "outstanding contribution to international human rights," and in 1996 received a doctor of letters degree from the University of New Brunswick for "years of selfless devotion to humane causes." In 1997 she established an endowment fund with the VanCity Community Foundation to help both children in foster care and women in prison to further their education.

Detective Noreen Waters is a 23-year member of the Vancouver Police Department and has been assigned to the pornography portfolio since 1992. During this time she has been involved in local, national, and international investigations related to child pornography and prohibitive adult material. She is presently pursuing changes to legislation relating to pardons (in particular for sex offences involving children), age of consent for sexual

contact, and the Internet as a tool to prey upon children.

Appendix 1

Declaration and Agenda for Action of Sexually Exploited Children and Youth

Endorsed by the Youth Delegates of *Out from the Shadows - First International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth*, held in Victoria, BC, March 12, 1998

PREAMBLE

In Victoria, Canada, on March 12, 1998, 55 delegates with experience as sexually exploited children and youth from across the Americas, presented a Declaration and Agenda for Action to representatives from participating governments, international non-governmental organizations and non-experiential delegates at *Out from the Shadows - First International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth*, a five-day event which provided a venue for youth to speak.

Leading up to the Summit, a series of consultations with young people in and from the sex trade took place in 16 cities across the Americas. Two youths from each consultation were invited and given the support necessary to attend *Out from the Shadows - First International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth*. During the first three days, opportunities for the youth delegates to relate their experiences and develop a vision for change came in the form of theater, music, storytelling, visual arts and the creation of this Declaration and Agenda for Action.

The process which developed the Declaration and Agenda for Action began in a predetermined traditional workshop format which included a draft Declaration and Agenda for Action. Youth present at the workshop tried to frame their experiences and stories into the context of the development of a final documents, while non-experiential participants also provided input. It became immediately apparent that what the youth present really needed was a safe place to tell their stories and relate their experiences. Through the tears, pain, experiences, and hopes expressed, themes, beliefs, and recommendations began to emerge.

One of the most important lessons in the development of this Declaration and Agenda for Action is that process is as important as product and must guide us in all efforts toward the eradication of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth.

The Declaration and Agenda for Action must be adopted and implemented in its entirety because without all the pieces in place, children and youth the world over will continue to suffer sexual exploitation and its many inter-related issues and impacts.

So many times our voices have not been heard. Here, at this Summit, we are united. Our voice is strong. This Declaration presents our united voice, the voices of sexually exploited children and youth. We represent a cross-section of society and we have many stories. Here you will hear our voice.

DECLARATION

We, the sexually exploited child and youth delegates gathered in Victoria, Canada, for *Out from the Shadows - International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth*, declare the following:

- **We declare** that the term child or youth prostitute can no longer be used. These children and youth are sexually exploited and any language or reference to them must reflect this belief.
- **We declare** that the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth is a form of child abuse and slavery.
- **We declare** that all children and youth have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation, and the threat of abuse, harm or exploitation.
- **We declare** that the commercial exploitation of children and youth must no longer be financially profitable.
- **We declare** that all children and youth have the right to know their rights.
- **We declare** that the issue of child and youth sexual exploitation must be a global priority and nations must not only hold their neighbours accountable but also themselves.
- **We declare** that governments are obligated to create laws which reflect the principle of zero tolerance of all forms of abuse and exploitation of children and youth.

AGENDA FOR ACTION

Our Agenda contains actions that are based on our beliefs. Our beliefs have come from what we have lived. To understand why these actions will work, you must understand our beliefs and the life experiences that have led to these beliefs.

- **We believe** that education is vital in our struggle against the sexual exploitation of children and youth.
- **We believe** that the voices and experiences of sexually exploited children and youth must be heard and be central to the development and implementation of action. We **must** be empowered to help ourselves.
- **We believe** that we have a right to resources that are directed toward sexually exploited children and youth and our very diverse needs.
- **We believe** that as children and youth, we are all vulnerable to sexual exploitation whether male, female, or transgendered.
- **We believe** that our laws must protect us as sexually exploited children and youth and no longer punish us as criminals.
- **We believe** that we are all responsible for our children and youth, yet the issue is not ours alone. Governments, communities, and society as a whole must be held accountable for the sexual exploitation of children and youth.