



KEEP THE PROMISE AUGUST 2014

Mary Jo Leddy, Co-Chair, Keep The Promise

Twenty-five years ago I had turned on the radio and heard the remarkable news that the parliament of Canada had voted unanimously to end child poverty by the year 2000. I felt then that the whole world was hushed and listening...

As we reflect back on that remarkable event, we now know that the motives behind this unanimous vote were mixed and the commitment to it was fragile. Nevertheless, for one brief shining moment we caught sight of all that we could and should be as a country. A promise was made to the children of this country, a commitment to honour the promise that each child is when they come into this world.

Keep the Promise is a small but mighty project that seeks to reawaken the moral imagination that ignited the all-party resolution to end child poverty in Canada. Over these last twenty-five years there have been many serious and important efforts to study and to strategize how to end child poverty. Indeed there is now a remarkable consensus as to how this could be done.

However, over the last twenty-five years, there has also been a hardening of heart, a weakening of political will to do so. Poverty in general, and child poverty in particular, have now been accepted as normal. Children living in poverty are now treated as acceptable losses.

Keep the Promise is an intergenerational project to end child poverty in Canada. We are a coalition of citizens who are determined to re-ignite the moral imagination of Canadians and move our politicians to act on our government's promise, made in 1989 through a unanimous motion in the House of Commons, to end child poverty by the year 2000.

Over these twenty-five years, my generation, the boomers, have now pushed their own retirement concerns to the top of the political agenda. Who will speak for the children and their concerns for the future?

One person who cared for the needs of children more than her own retirement benefits was June Callwood, a good friend of mine. For almost thirty years we had lunch together once a month and I listened, and learned, a great deal about child poverty from her. She had grown up in poverty. She had made it out, but not without some scars.

Many years ago I was going on a pilgrimage to El Salvador to mark the anniversary of the death of Archbishop Oscar Romero who had been murdered for his defence of the human rights of the poor. I told June that we would be taking the prayers of Canadians (written and sealed in envelopes) to place on the tomb of Romero. She thought this was a beautiful gesture and said she would send one. It arrived after I had left for the airport. For many years it remained unopened in a box of letters that I had saved. One day, after her death, I decided to open it. Like June, it was bold and tender:
“I pray that all the children of the world be safe.”

The prayer was not just for her children, or for some of the children, but for ALL of the children. The prayer was for their safety, for security, for solid ground in which to grow up and flourish. This was the moral imagination of June Callwood. It is also the vision that has shaped Keep the Promise. We no longer have her voice but we do have the smaller and stronger voices of children. Keep the Promise is grounded in the conviction that the best advocates for children are other children who have a basic sense of fairness. Children are our hope on two legs. Children are our greatest natural resource.

This is why Keep the Promise is an “intergenerational project” of adults supporting younger people in their effort to end child poverty. Together we will go to Ottawa on November 18–19 to remind politicians to keep the promise they made 25 years ago.



Greetings to all

Gayle Duchene, Editor

Welcome to the second edition of the Keep The Promise newsletter. This newsletter is really a microcosm of the whole project in which a number of individuals agree to make a contribution and, before you know it, we have a newsletter. When reading the articles, you will see that the same is true of the whole project – many people making a contribution come together to create a powerful, unified action. We are pleased to share our progress with you, our donors, friends and patrons, and we thank you for your continued support.

From the Co-ordinator's Desk

Michael Cooke , Project Coordinator

Child poverty doesn't take holidays. Nor has the KTP team.

In June, we launched the new Keep The Promise website www.keepthepromise.ca. It will serve as a valuable and multi-faceted tool for promoting KTP and engaging new audiences of youth and adults. At the end of the month, our Twitter handle @KTPcanada went live and tweeting about the campaign has begun. A full social media strategy will be in place for September.

In early July, Keep The Promise had a prominent place at the President's Forum of the Canadian Teachers' Federation in Winnipeg. The theme was "Social Justice and Equity at the Heart of the Curriculum". One hundred-plus delegates representing teacher federations across Canada reviewed the most current research underlining, yet again, the very significant negative impact of poverty on child development and learning outcomes. Creative and passionate teachers demonstrated multiple examples of how they are engaging their students in thinking about issues of child poverty, human rights and social justice.

The planning team for the Ottawa National Student Summit (November 18-19, 2014) has been meeting regularly to build these two days of learning and action. Students and teachers from across Canada will present their ideas on how to end child poverty and call on our government to commit to a concrete plan. The planning team includes representation from Campaign 2000, Citizens for Public Justice, Canada Without Poverty, First Nations Child & Family Caring Society and Millennium Kids.

The Video Team (Bree Fitzgerald, Jack Manchester, Alex Lalonde, Teza Lawrence and Todd Ross) have moved into high gear. They are shooting two KTP videos that will be ready for distribution by the end of August.



Our talent pool has grown significantly in the last three months. We welcome ...

- Connie Winder and Rennie Fisher, who will help us maintain and develop our website.
- Sara Hildebrand from Millenium Kids, who is helping with our social media strategy and the Ottawa Summit.
- Jennifer King, Joe Gunn, Jennie Ucar, Janelle Vandergrift and Michele Biss, who are members of the Ottawa Summit planning team.
- Mary Corkery and Rick Tobias, who are working with Mary Jo Leddy and Dani Mailing on fundraising.
- Michael Polyani, who is connecting KTP and the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.
- Clare McDowall from Socially Good, who is helping to design a social media strategy for us.
- Joanne Gosselin, a retired teacher from the Ottawa Catholic School Board, who is coordinating the Ottawa Youth Summit.

The momentum for and the engagement in KTP are growing daily. Child poverty doesn't take holidays and we won't either, until this campaign reaches its goals.



Ottawa Student Summit: November 2014

Joanne Gosselin

Keep the Promise takes their message to Ottawa—On November 18 and 19, 2014, Ottawa will host the first Keep the Promise National Student Summit with a focus on ending child poverty. The goal of the initiative is to engage students in a variety of hands-on learning experiences in citizenship and social justice, to give them leadership opportunities and to enable their voices to be heard. “Students say they want opportunities to be involved, to contribute and to have self-directed learning. They say that the truest form of engagement is self-directed and led. They want creativity, integrated technology, effective student governments and effective student representation. They want a voice to communicate with their teachers constructively, in the interests of improvement.” (Andrew Pawluch, Student, 2008)

In Year 1 of the two-year Keep the Promise campaign, we will work particularly with students in grades 5 to 8. Classroom participation prior to and at the Summit will:

1. increase awareness among students about child poverty in Canada;
2. support students to take leadership roles in calling for government action to end child poverty; and
3. support the engagement of students in school-community social action projects.

We are currently organizing a delegation of students from all across Canada to gather with interested Ottawa-area students for two days of discussions, skills development, meetings with parliamentarians and related activities including an interactive “Town Hall” meeting, all focused on ending child poverty in Canada. We will work with an Ottawa-area school that will play host to the delegation, help with organizing discussions and presentations, and offer a venue in which to meet. The Summit aims to bring together a diverse representation of young students from throughout the country to discuss “anti-poverty” issues that are important to them and showcase their ideas for addressing these issues on both a local and federal level.

This National Student Summit is an extraordinary opportunity. Students will have researched poverty issues in their own communities, formulating some very creative and innovative solutions using the Imagineaction social

justice platform resource (www.imagine-action.ca). The concept of “Student Voice” will be an integral part of these two days, engaging students who are creative, innovative, open-minded, curious and committed to making a difference in our communities.

I am Joanne Gosselin and I am honoured to have been selected as the Ottawa Delegation Coordinator for this important initiative. I have just recently retired after working in education for 32 years with the Ottawa Catholic School Board as a classroom teacher, department head, educational consultant and, most recently, as Student Success Coordinator for our school board. My most rewarding experiences have been working with students on “Student Voice” initiatives related to social justice, peers helping peers and leadership development. I have been directly involved in the coordinating and launching of the Ottawa Catholic School Board Youth Summit, as well as participating in the City of Ottawa Mayor’s Summit in 2012. I have been coordinating leadership camps for youth for almost 20 years and working on board-wide “Student Voice” programs for the past five years. I am very excited to be working with such a dedicated team, passionate about ending child poverty.

New Discussion Guide for Teachers and Students

Pauline Théoret, Program Officer, Canadian Teachers’ Federation

SOCIETY IS BROKEN

“Children are cold
Families are hungry
Dads are overworked
Mothers are crying
Nothing is done
Society is broken”

The idiom “Out of the mouths of babes” oftentimes refers to the surprising understanding of children of otherwise complex issues. This poem was how one middle school student shared feelings in a classroom exploration of the issue of poverty at the local level. The students thought about and discussed the issue of poverty from a variety of angles: What is it? Does it exist everywhere? What does it look like?

The Canadian Teachers’ Federation Advisory Committee on Diversity and Human Rights undertook an innovative way to teach about an issue that is part of every provincial and territorial curriculum in Social Studies, Health and/or Language Arts. The committee members, all teachers, facilitated discussions based on a standard set of questions developed by the committee, in grades 5 to 8 classrooms in Manitoba, Ontario, Québec and New Brunswick. While some may say that the 200+ students who took part in this initiative are not representative of our country as a whole, they are wrong. No matter who you are, how old you are, or where you live – no child should be living in poverty in this country.

The student responses clearly articulated a critical need to address a societal issue that plagues every country in the world, even a wealthy one like ours! As one student said, “Probably lots of people in our school live in poverty. Like, one out of three. That’s about 50 kids in my school, and I’m one of them.”

According to the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Canada’s projected budget for 2015-2016 estimates a surplus of \$7.8 billion. Canadian household debt levels in 2013 were equivalent to over 90% of the country’s GDP. To quote yet another idiom, is this “striking a balance”? How will this fiscal paradox support children and families living in poverty? A \$7.8 billion surplus means our government has the ability to honour the 1989 promise of a previous Conservative government, supported unanimously in the House of Commons. Child poverty remains to a great extent a question of political will. Twenty-five years later there are as many children living in poverty as there were then.

One student expressed a need to make political leaders empathize with those who live with poverty every day, saying, “I think [everyone in the government] should have to live in poverty for a year to understand what it’s like.” That’s a great suggestion from someone who knows and understands the unfairness of it all; words of wisdom “out of the mouths of babes.”



Poverty, What is it? A discussion booklet for students in grades 5 to 8 was developed as a supporting tool for the CARE Theme of Imagineaction and to complement the Keep the Promise campaign.

As the education partner in this ongoing social justice campaign, we know that both student interest and the development of their social identities grow from their connections to family, school, and community. We know that students resent unfairness and that their creativity and energy can “move mountains” to seek a balance in accessibility and equity for every person in this country of ours.

We also know that the right, and the potential, for successful educational outcomes for all students are indelibly linked to conditions in which they live. We call on all teachers to involve their students in acting, speaking out and effecting change. Get your students involved in an issue that touches them directly and one excellent way is to join Imagineaction in the Keep the Promise campaign today.

For additional information on the Poverty Booklet, please visit www.imagine-action.ca or www.ctf-fce.ca as of September 2014.

Spreading the Word

Connie Winder

My name is Connie Winder and I have spent much of my career in the field of early childhood – working with children and families, teaching pre-service early childhood educators and participating in a variety of research partnerships. I recently volunteered to help coordinate the newly launched Keep the Promise website. I know from my research in early childhood that the experience of child poverty leaves an imprint on that child’s genes. The mechanisms for this are complex, multifaceted and not yet completely understood but they help explain why a child’s socioeconomic status is the single most powerful predictor of her lifelong health. Of course there are individual differences in vulnerability and resilience but there is little doubt that the early years are tremendously important in determining later health outcomes. It appears that even if you acquire wealth and privilege later in life, you can’t completely outrun your first experiences in this world, particularly if you happened to be poor. There are so many reasons to eliminate child poverty in Canada but this is one that I find tremendously compelling. Simply put, experience gets under your skin.

I invite you to visit the KTP site to find out more about the significance of early childhood adversity (Hint: check out the link to The Human Early Learning Partnership on our Resources page) and the many, many other very good reasons to end child poverty in Canada. The website is your go-to resource to learn about the campaign, to provide current information about child poverty in Canada and to link you to some of the best available resources. Use it to find out how you and your friends can get involved. Use it to donate. Use it to call on our leaders to keep their promise. The website will serve as home base for our soon to be launched social media campaign.

Please check us out at www.keepthepromise.ca and please bring along your friends, too!

Two KTP Videos for Fall 2014

Bree Fitzgerald, Film group leader and June's Granddaughter

June used to say, "When you need to fix something, the first thing you do is get all the right people in the room." I live in Southeast Asia, so when Michael Cooke and I started talking about putting KTP's creative committee together, we knew that room had to be virtual. The first meeting we had was at 8pm on a Tuesday in Toronto, which was 7am on a Wednesday for me.

The creative committee was formed to come up with ways to visually deliver the KTP message. It's a powerful message and we wanted exceptional people on board to think through how to generate the most impact. I reached back into my childhood to two friends, women I have known since I was 15. One is a high school friend who grew up to be a producer and is the former Awards Director for the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television, the fabulous Alex Lalonde; and the other is a friend from summer camp, the equally inspiring Teza Lawrence, who is an award-winning Executive Producer at Amaze Films. There is sweetness to working with women you knew as children. Particularly when it's children you are working for.

I sent these two extraordinary women the concept I had written for a PSA, along with some info about the KTP mandate. I said, "It's not a paid position; your time would be volunteered. We would meet a couple times in the coming months, brainstorm conceptually, put together a work plan, and a budget we'd submit to the committee. Then we'd use our contacts, and those of the committee, to get 'er done."

Which is pretty much what happened. Teza brought on Deb Day of Innovation by Day and her team to create our website. My cousin Jack Manchester wrote up two new concepts for PSAs. Todd Ross and Patrick Flanagan brought their wisdom in. Pauline Théoret of the Canadian Teachers' Federation contributed her extremely valuable experience on how to reach kids. We all talked to our children.

Months later, and after many cross-global Skype calls, often late in the evenings or before the birds were up, we had a website launched and two films in the making. Alex and Teza worked from within her own networks and soon we had some of the best in our field, as well as vendors and contractors, waiving fees and donating time and equipment. Acclaimed director and cinematographer Peter Mishara volunteered to shoot and direct. This summer we will shoot two PSAs for nearly a third of their cost, edit through August and launch in September.

June always made it look easy; anyone who worked with her would say the same. It's not, of course, but she did have a very effective formula for mounting action, and it's one KTP has employed from the start: you think of the most compassionate, capable people you know and – you call them.

June style.



"Is there something missing?"

Well, there is: the student voice, which is at the heart of the KTP campaign. School's out for the summer, and the students are gone! Stay tuned for the next issue of the newsletter when our registration opens and that student energy is unleashed!

Campaign 2000 and Keep The Promise

Laurel Rothman

Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty in Canada (C2000) is delighted to welcome Keep the Promise (KTP) to its cross-Canada network of more than 100 diverse organizations that continue to monitor the 1989 unanimous, all-party House of Commons' resolution to end child poverty in Canada. Since 1992 our network representing low income people; housing, healthcare and childcare providers; social planning councils; teachers; social workers; faith communities; unions and many others has tracked progress/lack thereof on the commitment to end child and family poverty in Canada through annual report cards at the national and provincial levels, policy discussion papers and meeting with elected representatives and officials. Our coalition is pleased to be part of honouring June Callwood's activism on child and family poverty, her unfinished legacy. As an active participant on the Keep the Promise Steering Committee and the administrative and organizational 'home' to both C2000 and Keep the Promise, Family Service Toronto supports the provision of 'value-added' energy and resources to re-awaken the public consciousness about child poverty. Our network is excited that the partnership with KTP and the Canadian Teachers' Federation will raise the distinct voices of students more prominently in the public discussion on child poverty.

On November 24th in Toronto, Campaign 2000: End Child Poverty in Canada and Family Service Toronto will mark two important occasions. Twenty-five years ago, in November 1989, the House of Commons unanimously resolved to end child poverty among children in Canada. This resolution sparked the creation of the Campaign 2000 network. This year, Family Service Toronto is proudly celebrating 100 years of vital work responding to the needs of the ever-changing population of Toronto with innovative programs and services to build the capacity of individuals, families and communities to navigate life's challenges. As a key celebration of a century of community service, FST and Campaign 2000 will be releasing its annual report card on child and family poverty in Toronto followed by an event to address the persistent challenges of child and family poverty and to propose and discuss practical solutions. Stay tuned for more details in the coming Fall, 2014. For more information, check our websites at www.campaign2000.ca and www.familyservicetoronto.org.

We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many things can wait. Children cannot. Right now their bones are being formed, their blood is being made, and their senses are being developed. To them we cannot answer, "Tomorrow." Their name is today.

—*Gabriela Mistral*



For more information, contact Michael Cooke at mcooke253@gmail.com or 416-209-6156.

To make a donation, go to www.keepthepromise.ca and click on the *Donate* tab, or send a cheque to:

Keep The Promise
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All donations will receive a charitable receipt for income tax purposes.