



activity

protect

environment

mental health

quality

food security



safe

2010

literacy

Children's Charter

freedom

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS



advocacy



Introduction

Children are the foundation for our community. In Thunder Bay, according to the 2006 Census, there are 17,800 children between the ages of 0 to 14 making up 16 % of the population with the majority of this group under age 10. We have a responsibility to nurture the growth and development of the youngest members of our society. For the past five years the Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition has been raising awareness of the basic rights and freedoms of our children. Our investment in the healthy and positive upbringing of our children is an investment in the development of the healthy and productive communities of tomorrow.

The Children's Charter Coalition is proud to present the 2010 report. We are taking a look back at the last five years to reflect on where we've been and what we've accomplished.

The Coalition has produced detailed reports to the community, highlighting one or more of the rights contained in the Charter. The purpose of each is to educate the public, highlight successes and areas that need further work, and act as a call to action for parents, community members, and policy makers.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

Margret Mead

Despite many achievements, there are still many children's issues that need attention and many opportunities to improve the lives of the children in our city. The Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition works toward the goal to:

1. Advocate for needed services for children and their families.
2. Promote public education on issues involving children's needs.
3. Promote co-ordinated efforts on behalf of children.
4. Assist in community planning on the needs of children.
5. Encourage governments to be proactive in dealing with children's issues and needs.

Laura Prodanyk
Thunder Bay District Health Unit
Chair,
Thunder Bay Children's Charter

The Charter was developed to articulate a vision for the children of Thunder Bay, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child for children throughout the world. It was endorsed by the City of Thunder Bay in June 2004. The Coalition is made up of people and organizations that care about children and want to put their needs first. Members believe that all children of our community deserve basic rights and freedoms as outlined in the Thunder Bay Children's Charter.

For more information about the Children's Charter Coalition please contact Laura at 625-5952 or laura.prodanyk@tbdhu.com.

Joe Virdiramo
City Councillor
Children's Advocate,
City of Thunder Bay

What Can I Do?

10 Ways to Advocate for Children and Youth. Adapted from the Canadian Paediatric Society, *Are We Doing Enough?* A status report on Canadian public policy and child and youth health found at www.cps.ca.

Food Security in Thunder Bay & District

Where we Were

- In 2005, 13% of families with children under age 25 in our region reported being food insecure. *
- Food insecurity was significantly higher in single parent households 26% and single mother-led households 27%.
- In March 2005, in this region, over 173,000 meals were served and approximately 68,000 food hampers were given out by the 15 food banks, 3 hot meal programs and 2 Christmas hamper programs served by the Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA).
- Food bank usage has increased 89% over the past 4 years.
- In 2005, 15% of children aged 17 and under were living in poverty.
- * **Food security means having access to enough quantity and quality of food.**

What's Being Done

- The Food Action Network (FAN) brings many groups in Thunder Bay together to improve food security. Over the last decade FAN started the following initiatives:
 - The Thunder Bay Good Food Box program offers fresh produce at a reduced price to 400 + customers each month.
 - The Gleaning Program takes people out to local farms to pick for free after the main harvest.
 - Community kitchens at various agencies in the city and district provide a way for people to make new contacts, learn new cooking skills and stretch their food dollars.
 - Community gardens around the city and district bring people together to learn gardening and grow food in a shared space.
 - The Get Fresh campaign promotes regional farmers and offers workshops on how to find, store and prepare local food.
- The Thunder Bay Food Charter was developed with community input and was adopted by Thunder Bay City Council and the Thunder Bay District Social Services Board in 2008. Learn more about the food charter and other food security initiatives at www.nwofood.ca.
- In response to high food bank usage, the RFDA has relocated to a larger building to serve their clients better.

Trends

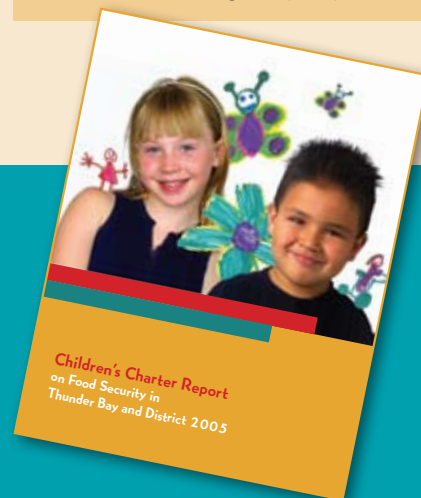
- Food bank usage went up 29% in 2008 and 46% in 2009. This was the largest increase in Ontario. 36% of people served by food banks are 16 or younger.
- Three times as many off-reserve Aboriginal as non-Aboriginal households report that they cannot afford food. Their average annual income is 40% less than the Thunder Bay average and 10% below the Ontario average for Aboriginal people.

1

Share these reports with others. Send to doctors, health or social service providers & anyone who can benefit from learning about the Charter. Ask your friends to do the same.

2

Write a letter to your local newspaper about one of the issues in the reports or about the Charter. Ask children to do the same.



More Kids, More Active, More Often

Where we Were

- 80% of children spend more than 2 hours per day involved in screen related activities like watching TV, using the computer or text-messaging.
- 36% of families report that they are regularly active with their children.
- Ontario only requires one physical education credit to graduate from high school.
- Most physical education classes in elementary schools are 30-40 minutes, twice a week, and are not taught by a physical education specialist.
- Only 15% of Ontario youth take part in intramural sports. Intramural sports are limited in Thunder Bay due to the shorter lunch periods in secondary schools, and the use of gyms for eating lunch in elementary schools.
- Only 25% of Ontario youth participate in inter-school sports and it has been declining since 2000.

What's Being Done

- In 2010, the City of Thunder Bay created and supported 10 kilometres of new bike lanes & shared lanes on city streets.
- A skate board park has been created at the Marina.
- The city has committed to continuing to develop & support improved city recreation trails.
- City Council has continued to fund splash pads and local public pools for the use of all children.
- The Health Unit runs the Healthy Buddies program to address healthy eating, moving more & developing healthy self-esteem in elementary aged children. This peer-led program has been piloted in one school in Thunder Bay in 2009-2010. Significant improvements were seen in physical endurance, knowledge around healthy eating, and in the school social climate.
- City Council and several organizations came together to develop the Big Boreal Adventure which is a free family activity aimed at getting kids outside in nature. Visit the public library for your free Boreal kit.

Shared lanes are traffic lanes built to a wider standard with painted bike symbols & directional arrows. If cyclists are in the lane, slow down & pass with care. If cyclists are not in the lane, motorists should drive normally.

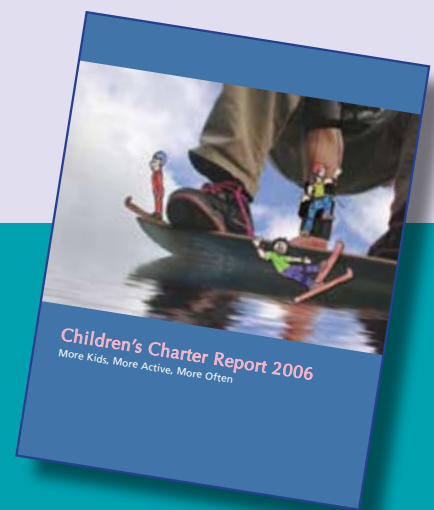
- The Active & Safe Routes to School Committee has been formed. The benefits of walking or biking to school has been well documented including increased readiness to learn, healthier body weights, and improved mental and physical health.
- The Health Unit produces Healthy, Happy Kids E-bulletin with tips on how to get your kids moving, eating well and feeling good about themselves. Sign up for it at tbdhu.com

3

Write a letter to your MP or MPP about one of the issues in this report. Ask children to write a letter too. Letters from children require special attention from ministers and can have a greater impact. Visit www.ontario.ca for links to government contacts.

4

Support an anti-poverty organization. Make Poverty History is currently running a campaign to end child poverty. Visit www.makepovertyhistory.ca for more information.



Catch the Dream of Life-long Literacy

Where we Were

- About 4 in 10 Canadians have difficulty with everyday numeracy tasks like balancing a chequebook, calculating a tip and measuring distances.
- 4 out of 10 Ontario adults don't have the literacy skills needed to meet the demands of today's knowledge-based society.
- Adults Accessing Literacy Services
 - In 2006-2007, 810 in Northwestern Ontario
 - In 2006 - 2007, 914 in Thunder Bay
- In 2005-06, 32% of the children in our community were behind where they should be in their development, this has increased to 35% by 2008-09 based on the Early Development Instrument results for our community.

What's Being Done

- In 2010, the new Mary J. L. Black Library starts construction on a new site to be opened in 2011 and will have enhanced access and services for children and teens. These services will include a teen's study room and a children's outdoor storytelling garden.
- Since 2007, the Thunder Bay Public Library expanded its multilingual collections to include materials relevant to newcomers to Thunder Bay such as an Arabic book collection for children.
- Best Start Hubs have many resources to help develop children's reading, numeracy and learning skills, and have many other child development and parental support services. Find a Best Start Hub by visiting the Thunder Bay and District Best Start website: www.yourbeststart.ca or call 624-5690.
- Fair Start now includes screening of emergent literacy skills.
- The Early Literacy Facilitator works with the community, parents, families and professionals to strengthen, support and promote effective literacy and language development for children 0 to 6 and their families. For more information contact Communities Together for Children/Best Start at 624-2371.

Summary

In our community, more than 1 in 3 children (35%) reaching kindergarten are behind where they should be in their development. Anything more than 10% is avoidable under optimal conditions of early childhood, so therefore 2/3 of the developmental vulnerabilities children bring to school in kindergarten in our communities, are avoidable. This high rate of early (and avoidable) vulnerability translates into social and economic costs.

5

Screen a film about child and youth health and well-being at your local school or community centre. In *Poor No More*, comedian Mary Walsh takes several struggling Canadians on a journey to see how other countries help people like themselves.

6

Organize an event. Work with a children's or social advocacy group to raise awareness about issues in your community through a creative event. Have children paint pictures of what health looks like to them, or ask older children and youth to perform skits about what makes children healthy. Invite local politicians and the media to the presentation.



Because Everybody Needs a Home

Where we Were

- There are increasing concerns about the effects that exposures to indoor and outdoor contaminants can have on the health and safety of children and pregnant women.
- Contaminants of concern in the past have focused on lead, mercury, second hand smoke and outdoor pollution. New contaminants of concern include pesticides, phthalates and BPA or bisphenol A found in hard or rigid plastics.

What's Being Done

- The province of Ontario's Cosmetic Pesticide Ban came into effect in April 2009.
- The province of Ontario's Toxic Use Reduction Strategy came into effect in 2009.
- Government of Canada officially banned Bisphenol A in baby bottles in March 2010. Bisphenol A is an endocrine disrupting chemical.
- Thunder Bay has a new smoke free parks by-law that came into effect on June 1, 2010. The main points of the by-law to remember are no smoking 10 metres from:
 - playground equipment
 - any beach area (including waters edge, sandy or rocky beach)
 - any recreational facility (hockey arenas, etc.)
- Two local Children's Environmental Health Champions were certified in the City of Thunder Bay. Their role is to increase awareness of children's environmental health issues.
- The Champions and the Children's Environmental Health Working Group from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit delivered over 80 presentations and attended over 40 events in the City and District.
- The Health Unit became a member of the Healthy Retrofits Advisory Committee with a goal to prevent fetal and child exposure to toxic chemicals that may arise during and after energy efficiency retrofits.
- An environmental health checklist was developed by the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment (CPCHE) to assist daycares in reducing possible sources of toxic chemical exposure in child care settings.
- The 2008 Children's Charter Report was presented at the 2008 Ontario Public Health Conference in Toronto, the 2010 Early Years Conference on the Rights of The Child in Victoria, BC; and featured on the CPCHE website as a best practice project. The report is being adapted by Ontario and New Brunswick.

7

Visit your local MP or MPP. Bring the Charter reports with you and focus on the one issue you are most passionate about. If you can't choose, you may want to focus on poverty, which has wide-ranging effects on health.

8

Volunteer for a child/youth health organization. Look for local organizations that need help or search through Volunteer Canada or another volunteer matching organization.



Children's Mental Health and Addictions

Where we Were

- One in 5 children has a mental health issue, yet of the children who need help, only 17% will actually receive it.
- Two-thirds of students in Northwestern Ontario use alcohol and one-third use marijuana. These rates are higher than the provincial average.
- Northwestern Ontario students:
 - 54% report binge drinking in the last four weeks
 - 76% report hazardous drinking
 - 84% are more likely to report drinking and driving than other students in the province.
- In North America, suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year olds. For First Nations youth, suicide is five to six times higher than their non-Aboriginal peers.

What's Being Done

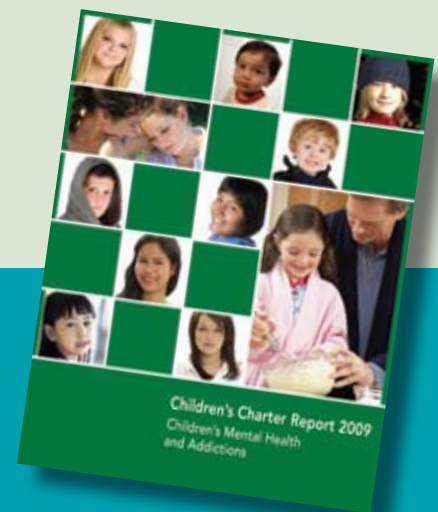
- In 2009, the Child Victim Witness Program began providing service to the City of Thunder Bay. The program provides support to children and youth under the age of 18 who are called to testify in court as a result of being a victim or witness of a crime. The Program provides sensitive, client-centered services to child victims and witnesses to reduce the trauma of communicating evidence in court. The program is funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General and is delivered by the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre. For information contact 684-1880.
- Children's Centre of Thunder Bay and the Thunder Bay Public Library are collaborating to develop book, audio and film resources for children, teens, parents and mental health specialists on the subject mental health.
- Triple P is launched in the City of Thunder Bay and District. This parenting program was developed using years of research and testing and has been adopted and led by a coalition of 9 local community agencies. For information visit triple-p.ca.
- The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy is under development and a draft report with recommendations will be available in Autumn 2010 for public comment. The Strategy contains many recommendations that address youth mental health and substance misuse issues, including prevention activities. For information on the Drug Strategy and how to comment on the report, visit www.thunderbaydrugstrategy.ca
- The Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force was formed to respond to and prevent youth suicide. The Task Force created a system to rapidly respond to schools in the event of a suicide crisis. The "Your Teen Needs You" campaign was launched to encourage parents to stay connected to teens. The Task Force completed consultations with 200+ secondary students and has released the Youth Voice Report 2010 with proposals to be implemented over the next two years.

9

Make contact with a local Aboriginal group and ask how you can help raise awareness of their situation and encourage your legislators to take action. Aboriginal children and youth suffer ill-health at far greater rates than most non-Aboriginal children and youth.

10

Look for opportunities to honour children and youth, and advocate for their health and wellness. October is celebrated as the month of the child. National Child Day is November 20 each year.



Thunder Bay Children's Charter

ALL CHILDREN DESERVE BASIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS. A FAIR SHARE OF SOCIETY'S RESOURCES MUST BE DEVOTED TO ENSURING THIS. FAMILIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR RAISING THEIR CHILDREN. THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD CLEARLY STATES THAT WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITIES, ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENTS HAVE A DUTY TO ASSIST FAMILIES TO FULFILL THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.*

All Thunder Bay children deserve:

- ✓ a quality of life that meets their physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs.
- ✓ to have enough nutritious food every day.
- ✓ to have a safe and comfortable place to live.
- ✓ quality child care and/or early education programs.
- ✓ to have safe places to play, and access to affordable recreational activities.
- ✓ quality primary, secondary, and affordable post secondary education.
- ✓ the resources to ensure life-long good health.
- ✓ to be served by governments that put the health and well-being of children first by ensuring enough funding for children's programs.
- ✓ to be protected from neglect and abuse.
- ✓ to be safe from exploitation.**

* For the purposes of this Charter, children are defined as being from birth to eighteen years of age.

** For the purposes of this Charter, being exploited means to be used unfairly by someone else to meet their own needs.

THUNDER BAY CHILDREN'S CHARTER COALITION

- Children's Aid Society
- Children's Advocate, City of Thunder Bay
- Children's Centre Thunder Bay
- City of Thunder Bay – Community Services Department
- Communities Together for Children – Best Start
- Dilico Anishnabek Family Care
- Fair Start
- Lakehead Elementary Teachers of Ontario
- NorWest Community Health Centres
- Our Kids Count
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
- Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
- Thunder Bay Counselling Centre
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre
- Thunder Bay Public Library

To obtain a copy of this report go to:

TBDHU.COM

THUNDERBAY.CA