



February 17, 2017

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Youth Matters - Pledge, Guiding Principles, and “Paige’s Story” Report Back

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board

- A. Receive for information staff’s report back on the Park Board’s progress made on implementing recommendations related to the City of Vancouver from the May 2015 report from the BC Representative for Children and Youth entitled [Paige’s Story: Abuse, Indifference and a Young Life Discarded](#).
- B. Endorse the *Youth Matters Pledge of Support and Guiding Principles of Youth Matters Community Accountability* as described in Appendix A.

POLICY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On June 27, 2012, the Vancouver Park Board adopted the Park Board Strategic Framework setting goals of improved accessibility and inclusivity, enhanced participation, active community participation, and productive collaborations.

On September 29, 2014, the Vancouver Park Board received for information the City of Vancouver’s Healthy City Strategy which includes as a goal a good start for all children and youth ages 0-24 and an action to create a ‘good start’ framework.

On January 11, 2016, the Vancouver Park Board passed a motion directing staff to implement eleven (11) strategies which address the principles contained in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s* Call to Action.

BACKGROUND

On [July 7, 2015, City Council passed a motion](#) directing City staff to report back on progress made on implementing recommendations related to the City of Vancouver from the May 2015 report from the BC Representative for Children and Youth entitled “[Paige’s Story: Abuse, Indifference and a Young Life Discarded](#)”.

Paige was a young Aboriginal woman of 19 years when she died of a drug overdose in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. The Representative’s report documents Paige’s life as a downward spiral of a child who never received the care that she needed and deserved. While she died of an overdose, this was the result of years of abuse and ineffectiveness of systems that were meant to protect children like her. During her short life, Paige changed schools 16 times before quitting in Grade 10; between 2009 and 2014, she move 50 times from foster homes to SROs to shelters to couch surfing, and was involved in more than 40 police files.

In January 2016, the Vancouver Park Board made a commitment to move forward on actions recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that are within Park Board's jurisdiction. The eleven strategies to be implemented reflect a broad and inclusive approach. Aboriginal children and youth are among the most vulnerable groups of youth in Vancouver and across Canada, with many having poorer health status, lagging behind in education, experiencing deep levels of poverty, and inadequate housing. As such the Vancouver Park Board Community Youth Development team is working with community partners to ensure the delivery of critical ongoing and one time responses to meet the needs of Vancouver's at risk children, youth, and families.

Some examples of the above work include:

- Park Board Community Youth Workers (CYWs) lead six Youth Service Hubs across the city to bring youth serving agencies together in an effort to ensure a safety net of support for vulnerable youth. At the meetings supports for vulnerable youth are discussed, community trends and service gaps are identified, and the team attempts to find solutions for these gaps.
- The Vancouver Park Board has partnered with ALIVE (Aboriginal Life in Vancouver Enhancement Society) and five Community Centre Associations to implement the Responsible Indigenous Strategy for Empowerment (RISE) program. RISE employs Aboriginal youth in community centres to engage Aboriginal residents and other community members in arts and culture, recreation, sports, and leadership programs.
 - RISE began in 2014 (building on the initial partnership work of Gen 7 in 2012) and since then has engaged 15 young Aboriginal leaders at eight community centres, and achieved over 4000 hours in community outreach engaging excluded populations, connecting Elders and implementing a diversity of initiatives. Five youth continued on as successful Community Centre employees
- The Vancouver Park Board is a funding partner of MoreSports, an inclusive community development strategy implemented in collaboration with the Vancouver School Board and nine Community Centre Associations. MoreSports makes sports available for all by eliminating barriers to participation and empowering youth as leaders in their own neighbourhood to create healthy, connected, and resilient communities.
 - MoreSports began in 2002. Annually it engages over 4,000 participants and 838 youth leaders in ten hubs that cover all 24 Vancouver neighbourhoods.
- The Youth Development Initiative was launched in 2015, outlining a strategy for Park Board CYWs that prioritizes engagement with vulnerable youth and addresses issues of youth leadership, access, and inclusion, both within the Park Board and within the wider community.
- CYWs participate in multiple inter-agency teams to identify and discuss community service needs and work towards solving them together. An example includes Children and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use (CYMHSU) Collaborative Local Action Team, a collaboration of health authorities, ministries, and community partners, with youth and families assuming leadership roles.

The Vancouver Park Board has 14 full-time and 2 part-time Community Youth Workers, a Community Youth Development Coordinator, and numerous staff who are dedicated to working with at risk youth. The Park Board's annual net expenditure towards addressing

needs of youth is \$1.4M. Community Centre Associations' net expenditure toward community youth development is approximately \$315,000 annually, plus in kind contributions.¹

DISCUSSION

A. Representative's Report

Meaningful improvement in response to children like Paige requires new ways of working together in community. The [Representative's Report](#) outlined 6 recommendations that identified 30 calls to action. Key messages from the report include the need for urgent action across all orders of government and the community to address gaps in supports for children and families at risk and a general concern about compliance with the duty to report among frontline service providers and professionals.

While the Provincial government was assigned the vast majority of the 30 actions, the City of Vancouver is named in five. As frontline service providers, Park Board staff have been working closely with City staff to act upon the recommendations identified in the report.

These actions include:

- Staff sit on a three tiered Rapid Response Team convened in July 2015 by the Province to address service gaps and respond to vulnerable children and youth in the Downtown Eastside (DTES).
- Participation in review, gap analysis, and action plan development for vulnerable children who reside or frequent the DTES.
- Park Board Community Youth Workers and core staff teams are trained on duty to report. CYWs are site leads for any issues arising from duty to report.
- Vancouver Park Board staff participates in TRRUST (Transition in Resources, Relationships and Understanding Support Together) which is a collective impact initiative funded by the Vancouver Foundation, that addresses service gaps for youth aging out of foster care in British Columbia.

B. Youth Matters Pledge and Guiding Principles Endorsement

Recreation Management and Community Youth Workers participate in the Youth Matters coalition which began as a response to youth at risk in the Grandview Woodlands neighbourhood in 2012. Youth Matters takes a collective impact and place-based approach to address issues faced by vulnerable youth.

The coalition includes over 30 organizations including the Ministry of Children and Family Development, City of Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health, the Vancouver Park Board, non-profit organizations, aboriginal organizations, residents, and youth. It meets on a quarterly basis to coordinate efforts to help address the gaps in support for inner city youth at risk, where a disproportionate number of children and youth involved with the Ministry or in government care are Aboriginal children. While administrative support is shared by Britannia Community Services Centre, Network of Inner City Community Services Society, and Ray-Cam Cooperative Centre, there is no ownership by one organization but rather multiple partners with agreements about roles, responsibilities, and resources.

¹ Ray-Cam Cooperative Centre and Britannia Community Services Centre are not included in this number.

Youth Matters members have worked on numerous initiatives including information sharing protocols between service providers responsible for serving youth at risk and their families, the Graduation Strategy supported by the Vancouver Board of Education, and other initiatives that benefit multiple inner city neighbourhoods and engage local partners. The group works to provide integrated access to outreach services for vulnerable families in the inner city by working together to remove barriers and promoting people-centred, participatory service delivery.

The attached *Youth Matters Pledge of Support* and *Guiding Principles of Youth Matters Community Accountability* support place-based, collective impact and local accountability concepts that align with the principles of inclusion and accessibility, the TRC recommendations, and the Youth Development Initiative.

While no one organization can independently create environments in which all people thrive, there are opportunities to lead, collaborate, and connect different aspects of Park Board work with others, including community members. Should the Park Board endorse the Pledge and Principles it will be reinforcing its commitment to improving inclusivity and accessibility, especially for our most vulnerable residents, as well as its understanding that health and well-being is everyone's responsibility, including youth and their families who are most impacted within Vancouver's neighbourhoods.

The Vancouver Park Board is uniquely positioned to directly and positively impact youth and their families in the communities they live in through frontline service delivery, youth outreach, and community development strategies. The Park Board's involvement with RISE and MoreSports demonstrates the positive outcomes that can be achieved when taking a place-based, collective impact approach to community engagement and development.

Signatories to date include the Representative for Children and Youth, the City of Vancouver, the First Nations Health Council, and the Indigenous People's Assembly of Canada.

SUMMARY

Park Board staff, with our partners, are acting on the recommendations from both the Representative's report and the TRC report. The Park Board's investment in Community Youth Development supports engaging youth as partners and directly supporting the most at-risk youth in our communities, and their families. Endorsement of the Youth Matters Pledge and Principles will reinforce the Park Board's commitment to, and leadership in, serving the youth in our communities.

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Youth Matters - Pledge of Support & Guiding Principles



Pledge of Support

YOUTH MATTERS COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY

Whereas children, youth, and families in Vancouver's inner city have a right to safe, nurturing, and healthy environments that promote optimal growth and development; and whereas community organizations, government services, ministries, and mandated services have been provided by society to act to consolidate this right; and whereas a disproportionate number Aboriginal children and youth continue to be taken into government care; and whereas many levels of government have adopted relevant recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, recognizing that systems must be accountable to Aboriginal people – and by extension to all affected individuals; the undersigned parties hereby affirm their commitment to community accountability.

We pledge to support the Youth Matters
Community Accountability Guiding Principles.

We pledge to support the goal of parents, children, elders, and youth to be meaningfully included in decisions about themselves and in their community.

We believe that their different perspectives, identities, and experiences must be acknowledged and valued.

We encourage and challenge organizations, institutions, and professionals to be truly accountable to the individuals receiving their services and to the community at large; to ensure services, funding, and resources are framed and grounded in the context and realities of their neighbourhoods and their lived experiences. Further, we encourage them to embrace and abide by and adhere to the spirit and intent of the Youth Matters Community Accountability Guiding Principles.





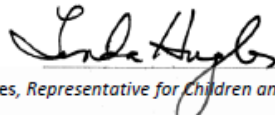
Dwight Dorey, Indigenous Peoples Assembly of Canada





Paul Finch, BCGEU





Linda Hughes, Representative for Children and Youth





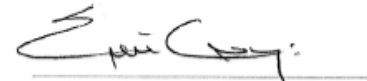
Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Task Group





Doug Kelly, First Nations Health Council





Ernie Crey, North West Indigenous Council

Youth Matters - Pledge of Support & Guiding Principles



Guiding Principles of Youth Matters Community Accountability

“Over the last three decades, many efforts to significantly move the dial on complex social issues have not been as successful as hoped. We need to try different things and to do things differently to transform the systems that gave rise to our existing social, economic and environmental challenges... The health and well-being of Vancouver is everybody’s business – across the public, private and civil sectors and including all of our residents.” — City of Vancouver, *A Healthy City For All*

The City of Vancouver’s Healthy City strategy, adopted in October 2014, has committed to such a transformation, anchored in resident involvement, with the clear ambition of promoting the health and well-being of all. In the months since, both the City and Park Board have also adopted relevant recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, recognizing that systems must be accountable to Aboriginal people – and by extension all affected individuals.

As organizations, institutions, professionals, and residents in the City of Vancouver, we believe that children, youth and families in our Inner City have a right to safe, nurturing, and healthy environments that promote optimal growth and development. In concurrence with the Healthy City strategy and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we support the goal of working together to develop and implement a community accountability process based on the following principles:

Accountability A process that increases the capacity, influence, and power of community residents (particularly those who are vulnerable and those requiring and/or receiving support) to safe and meaningful participation in the governance (decision-making) and determination of relevant delivery mechanisms, desired outcomes, and their measurement, as these respond to their changing needs.

Engagement A working environment where resources are secured to achieve outcomes, and to connect communities with one another as they pursue similar (but locally-relevant) paths or develop similar (but locally-relevant) community strategies, responses, programs. Agencies work together and with the community towards forming stronger partnerships. Identifying needs and gaps, together we will build on the strengths and assets of the community.

Inclusivity Culturally appropriate context, where indigenous and immigrant values and practices are valued. We honour, understand, and respect the diversity of the community and the varied perspectives of residents. We will respect and foster the meaningful engagement and involvement of families in their own plans to support their children and their families.

Place-based A model that taps into and brings together current community strengths with existing processes, rather than establishing parallel or alternative processes. Activating infrastructures and providing resources: utilizing local community anchors — public schools, public parks, libraries, and public recreation centres — to provide opportunities for community-driven learning, action, and health where people live.