



Backgrounder

2008 Representative's Awards of Excellence Recipients

Fred Ford - Advocacy Award of Excellence

For over 30 years, Fred Ford has demonstrated an unwavering dedication in his professional life, plus contributed countless volunteer hours, to improving the lives of children and youth, and the organizations that support them. Fred has been a key driver in building relationships between the non-profit sector, government and communities to increase supports available to vulnerable children in B.C., and communicating the need to take action as a community on child sexual abuse issues.

He is also a strong advocate for people with developmental disabilities, particularly those who were institutionalized and abused as children. His work with the BC Self Advocacy Foundation was critical in creating the Institutional Legacy Trust Fund.

Fred has led numerous influential campaigns to raise awareness and funding for Vancouver Island service agencies delivering the Sexual Abuse and Intervention Program (SAIP). His advocacy on behalf of sexually abused children has helped boost support for counseling programs across the province.

For eight years as Executive Director, Fred provided thoughtful and energetic leadership to the Mary Manning Centre in Victoria. Year after year, when funding issues challenged the Centre's ability to provide the timely services sexually traumatized children and youth require, Fred wore the Centre's cause on his sleeve. He helped to inspire the public, resulting in countless petitions signed and letters-to-editors written. He also inspired organizations, who donated services and capital. Throughout all challenges, Fred has remained focused on the rights of children and youth to rehabilitation.

Fred is now an instructor at the University of Victoria specializing in Disability Studies, and an independent consultant and advocate.

Quotes from Nomination Letters:

“Fred continues to make a difference in the lives of children and adults every day and we know he leaves the world a better place because of his many thoughtful contributions.”

“As a result of Fred’s continued efforts to make the issue of under-funding of the SAIP programs a priority, in 2008 MCFD increased the budget to provincially-funded SAIP programs by 50%. ... Your dedication on this issue, Fred, has improved the lives of children, youth and their families who experience sexual abuse, not only at our Centre, but across the Province.”

“Mr. Ford’s visionary leadership has nurtured the creation of a new concept for service integration in BC - the development of initial plans that would see law enforcement, justice, child protection and intake workers collaborating within one agency to provide seamless specialty services to abused children in the region.”

“He has distinguished himself by ‘doing the right thing’ and has not wavered in his commitment to serve and advocate for people with vulnerabilities, most notably people with developmental disabilities and children and youth who have been abused.”

Peter Thomas McKay – Cultural Heritage and Diversity Award of Excellence

Peter Thomas McKay is from the Nisga'a Nation and he resides in Gitlakdamix (New Aiyansh), B.C.

A language and culture teacher at the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School, Peter has spent his entire life promoting cultural teachings as received at a very young age from his Elders. Peter demonstrates patience, caring, and sharing in all that he does, and this is reflected in the work he does with children and youth wherever he goes.

Peter has been a cultural dance director or assistant in numerous Nisga'a and Tsimshian ceremonial dance troupes, and is always eager to share the spiritual significance of the songs, stories and dances that are performed. A talented artist, he has in the past gifted his work as a fundraiser for cultural programs and services for youth in the community.

Peter has a quiet yet determined approach in his manner of sharing, retaining and promoting the language, culture and pride of First Nations. His innovative approaches include the creation of "Jack" and "Jeets", videotaped Internet hand puppets he uses to help people from around the world learn and practice the Nisga'a language.

He has worked with the Kermode Friendship Centre as a facilitator within the context of traditional parenting, and at the First Nations Education Centre in Terrace, to help ensure students and staff become aware of First Nations values, beliefs, and teachings.

Quotes from Nomination Letters:

“There are so many people grateful for all that he has done. He has given away so much of his arts and crafts that he has made himself. He could be very rich, but he chooses to be rich in language and culture rather than with money. He has so much knowledge. And is always willing to learn more and teach what he knows.”

“He does so much for the people. He doesn’t try to be better than anyone, he wants the language and culture to stay alive and for all people to learn. He has so much patience for all people.”

“Peter demonstrates a thoughtful, caring and professional manner to both students and colleagues. His forthright and respectful way of relating to others enables Peter to give and receive dignity with respect. His quiet pride in his heritage, knowledge of history and culture earn him admiration from district staff and students.”

“I have observed how his lifestyle has been to reach for and to provide knowledge through a spiritual and culturally relevant way. I believe this is why he is respected amongst his peers and amongst other nations as he speaks from the heart and everything about Peter reflects his cultural life and lifestyle.”

Fir Square Combined Care Unit – Innovative Services Award of Excellence

The Fir Square Combined Care Unit program at BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre is the first in Canada to care for substance-using women and substance-exposed newborns in a single unit. The unique aspect of this care is that mothers and newborns, referred from all over B.C., are not separated after birth, but are cared for together in the mother's room, care described as "rooming-in".

Working within a model of woman-centered care, women participate in and guide every aspect of their care and discharge planning.

The philosophy of care is one of harm reduction, to help reduce substance use and risky behaviors that can cause harm to mothers and their babies. It is about meeting the woman where she is in the process.

The program, which began in 2003, helps women and their newborns stabilize and withdraw from substances, keeping mothers and babies together whenever possible and continuing to provide care from before birth to after the birth, and between hospital and community.

Women at Fir Square have access to counseling and education to enhance critical life skills, parenting techniques, and coping mechanisms. To ensure the healthiest start possible, babies receive specialized care that meets their needs if withdrawing from prenatal substance exposure. The majority of babies room with their mothers on the unit.

The Fir Square Combined Care team offers caring, non-judgmental support to the most marginalized women, and supports them to have a healthy pregnancy and the best chance of parenting.

Fir Square has established a multidisciplinary team approach. They work in close partnership with community agencies such as the Sheway Downtown Eastside program, the Ministry for Children and Family Development, and the alcohol and drug treatment system.

This innovative program has broken down stereotypes and broken through old paradigms of care to gain well-deserved national and international recognition.

Quotes from Nomination Letters:

“Fir Square is a place of safety for women and infants... even the most stressed, vulnerable women whose lives are characterized by chaos and risks of many kinds can take control of their situations, making themselves and ultimately their infants safer.”

“This program is the only one of its kind in North America. The outcomes speak for themselves. A reduced need to treat infants exposed to opiates, and many women ready to go home with their newborns, who would otherwise have been back on the streets and their infants removed.”

“What started as a small unit has now been recognized as best practice across the country and indeed around the world.”

“It is the vision of programs such as Fir Square that continue to step outside the status quo and deliver services that touch the very heart of women and children across our province, many of whom would not receive the quality and kind of care that Fir Square has become known to provide.”

After Hours Program (Team Members, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Fraser Region) – Service Provider Award of Excellence

The provincial After Hours Program meets the emergency needs of children and families in British Columbia. After Hours Program receives reports of suspected child abuse or neglect, as well as requests for other Ministry services, and has operated continuously in B.C. since the early 1970's.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development program has two 24/7 staffed offices: Vancouver and the Lower Mainland Response Team in New Westminster. There are additional staffed offices in Nanaimo, Victoria, Courtenay, Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George and Chilliwack. As well, a centralized Helpline for Children at the Vancouver After Hours Office provides 24-hour access to anyone reporting cases of child abuse or neglect.

A unique aspect of the After Hours program is the Car 86 program. The Vancouver Police Department has been in partnership with After Hours for more than 30 years, through the Car 86 program. This interdisciplinary team consists of police officers teamed up with social workers. The police department supplies the officer and police equipment, while the ministry provides a social worker and office space. After Hours is an integral and invaluable component of the partnership, which is one of the oldest inter-agency collaborations in the world involving police.

All After Hours offices are staffed with fully delegated social workers, providing knowledgeable, caring response and support to families, caregivers and children in care.

Quotes from Nomination Letters:

“After Hours social workers are true professionals who always put the best interests of children and their families first. They strive to implement Ministry programs with dedication, thoroughness, genuine caring and respect.”

“There is always a calm, supportive voice at the other end of the phone line, providing advice or assistance.”

“After Hours social workers possess an amazing depth and breadth of experience of working in child welfare and all other program areas of the ministry, and have worked with children of all ages. They have the ability to quickly adapt to the needs of callers.”

“The Vancouver Police Department has enjoyed an excellent relationship with MCFD through the “After Hours” program and is in full support of “After Hours” receiving an award of excellence from the office of the Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond.”

Bacilia “Cia” Ramirez – Youth Leadership Award of Excellence

Cia Ramirez, 19, is an emerging youth leader with a willingness to speak from the heart, to embrace both those who agree and disagree with her, and to give generously of her time, experience and knowledge.

She feels a deep personal responsibility to increase the voice of Aboriginal youth, address environmental issues, re-imagine a more inclusive and welcoming Canada, and look to a brighter future.

Working with the Vancouver Foundation, Cia is a member of the Youth Leadership Council. She has taken a lead role in planning, community engagement and decision-making for Youth Vital Signs - a youth-made research and public opinion initiative that gives fresh voice to experience and knowledge that will inspire change through understanding and action.

With the Reel Youth organization, Cia helped produce and film “*Residential Truth - Unified Future*”, a documentary on the impact of residential schools. It has been chosen by jury to be released at the 2008 Vancouver International Film Festival.

Cia has represented the Fresh Start education program at youth fairs, and actively engages other young people in discussions on the importance of education. Also a member of the Native Friendship Centre, she strongly urges others to look beyond the injustices of the world to be an active part of positive change.

Cia personally undertakes initiatives to implement such change, such as starting recycling programs and being a passionate advocate for the environment.

Her career goal is to be a social worker, and she is currently attending Hastings Education Centre through the Fresh Start Program, towards her goal of graduating in 2009.

Born and raised in Vancouver, Cia is a member of the Cowessess Nation in Saskatchewan and a proud mother to 4-year old daughter Tikiya.

Quotes from Nomination Letters:

“Cia’s community leadership activities and priorities are informed by personal experience, and by bearing witness to the struggles faced by her friends and family. Part of her gift is an ability to recognize problems and injustices as an opportunity to grow, to heal and to love.”

“It helped that she saw herself as a warrior. Just like a warrior, Cia knew that she could not give up, and did not ... What she has accomplished and shown to us all is that she is a true warrior, one who leads by example.”

“Cia’s ability to facilitate cooperation, think from an audience perspective, and inspire others to work from a place of passion has made the project a huge success.”

“Bacilia knows you don’t have to look far to see there are injustices in the world. She also knows we can all contribute positive change and she is not afraid to stand up and become a part of the change.”

Dr. Lois Jean Hlady – Life-time Achievement Award of Excellence

Dr. Hlady is a determined leader, in British Columbia and nationally, in diagnosis and support of children experiencing abuse, neglect and maltreatment.

Through creating interdisciplinary teams, new pediatrics programs, and building a clinical model to diagnose and support the recovery of children, Dr. Hlady has given unselfishly of her time, intelligence and passion to ensuring that children's lives are protected and improved. Her work is meticulous and her public service to the children and the people of British Columbia is truly impressive.

A pediatrician at BC Children's Hospital (BCCH), Dr. Hlady is also a clinical professor of Medicine at UBC. Her primary role is Director of the Child Protection Service Unit at BCCH.

She provides leadership and direction to this multidisciplinary team and provides direct medical care to abused and neglected children from around the province. She is a national and international authority on shaken baby syndrome, and provides consultation to general practitioners and specialists across the province on child abuse diagnosis and treatment.

Dr. Hlady was instrumental in establishing the first full-service Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Unit at Children's Hospital (the Child Protection Service Unit), which takes a multi-disciplinary approach to diagnosis and treatment for child abuse victims. She is committed to providing education to the community in the field of child abuse and has given countless presentations and workshops.

She is very dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and to public awareness of these issues.

Quotes from Nomination Letters:

“Dr. Hlady has spent 25 years in service to children who experience the most difficult circumstances. These children frequently face circumstances that are simply unimaginable to most of the public. These children often don’t have the love and support that other children facing illness may have... Those of us who have watched Dr. Hlady do job are in awe of her commitment, skill, and expertise and ability to maintain this level of commitment over such a long period of time.”

“Dr. Hlady has been an advocate for best practice in the field of child maltreatment for over 20 years. She has been a strong advocate for continuing education, in setting the standard for medical experts in this province and helping them to maintain their expert status within the legal system.”

“She provides great vision and leadership in her work, exemplified by this extraordinary career of service to infants and children. She has earned the respect and admiration of people from all walks of life: patients, medical students, academic and professional colleagues, the police, the legal profession, the judiciary, public officials, social workers and government and hospital administrators.”

“She is a true humanitarian who cares deeply for the disadvantaged in our society, and truly a treasure who deserves to be honored with recognition of her lifetime of compassionate and impressive work.”