



**Minutes of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee Meeting held  
Thursday, February 22, 2024 CRD boardroom, 6th floor, 625 Fisgard Street**

**PRESENT:**

**Municipal Representatives:** Marie-Térèse Little (Metchosin); Jeff Bateman (Sooke); Kimberley Guiry (Langford); Marcie McLean (Highlands); Esther Paterson (Oak Bay); Adam Flint (View Royal); Micayla Hayes (Saanich); S. Duncan (Sidney) (EP); Mena Westhaver (Saanich) (EP); Rose Stanton (Highlands-Alternate) (EP)

**Capital Regional District (CRD) Representatives:**

**School District Representatives:** Teri Vanwell, (School District 63 Trustee) (EP); Karin Kwan (School District 61 Trustee) (EP)

**Guests:** Caileigh Owen, (Staff Family Lawyer, University of Victoria Law Centre); Meghan Klymchuck, (University of Victoria Law Centre)

**Resource Members:**

**CRD Staff:** Steve Carey (Senior Manager, Legal & Risk); Sharon Orr; (Senior Committee Clerk, Legislative Services); Marnie Essery (Secretary) (EP).

**Regrets:** Krista Loughton (Victoria); Bill McElroy (C.R.A.T.); Cynthia Day, (Colwood); Jack McLintock (North Saanich).

EP - Electronic Participation

The meeting was called to order at 11:34 am.

**1. Territorial Acknowledgement**

Chair Little provide the Territorial Acknowledgement.

**2. Welcome and Introductions**

Introductions were made around the room and online.

**3. Resource Agencies**

There were no members from the resource agencies in attendance.

**4. Approval of the Agenda**

**MOVED** by E. Paterson, **SECONDED** by K. Guiry,  
That the agenda for February 22, 2024 Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee meeting be approved.  
**CARRIED**

## **5. Adoption of Minutes**

### **5.1. Receipt of 2023 A.G.M. Minutes**

**MOVED by A. Flint, SECONDED by M. McLean,  
That the minutes of the January 25, 2024 Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee  
Annual General Meeting be received.  
CARRIED**

### **5.2. Adoption of the January 25, 2024 Minutes**

**MOVED by J. Bateman, SECONDED by K. Guiry,  
That the minutes of the January 25, 2024 Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee  
be adopted.  
CARRIED**

### **5.3. Receipt of the Steering Committee meeting notes of February 8, 2024**

**MOVED by M. McLean, SECONDED by J. Bateman,  
That the notes of the February 8, 2024, Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Steering  
Committee be received.  
CARRIED**

## **6. Chairperson's Remarks**

The Chair stated there is growing momentum for the attendance of the meetings and she is pleased to see everyone. We are doing vital and good work.

## **7. Presentations/Delegations**

### **Caileigh Owen, Lawyer, University of Victoria Law Centre**

- Clients have to qualify financially. Referrals are usually through word of mouth.
- During our term we do all the intakes and then take information to a supervisor lawyer and then back to client with a plan.
- UVic Law Centre has programs at William Head Institution and Victoria Native Friendship Centre.
- Law Centre has 1,000 active files a year. They didn't know if they had any youth justice files at all and accept limited family files.
- Focus is always on the best interest of the child. What that means is dependent on the case such as cultural and ethnicity factors. Decisions are made by adults and children don't get to give input until they are 12-14 and then it is subjective as the judge will decide how much weight that carries.
- In law school, spoke to family lawyers and there is a lot of stress and feeling overwhelmed. Highly emotional volatile situation.
- There are challenges with first responders managing these situations effectively. There is not enough training in the justice system re domestic violence and family violence.

- It is a big ask but hiring more family judges and hiring more family lawyers would help. As well, increasing funding for legal aid and the pay for these lawyers.
- What they are seeing in the Provincial Court System-there is a lot of rhetoric that is not user friendly. Lack of training for people who are self representing and so there are many hearings and delays, lack of consistency and organization, need for navigators. The system is very challenging to navigate and there needs to be better education for people.

### **Meeting notes taken by the CRD's Steve Carey**

- Intimate partner violence is a problem in family matters
  - is apparent in the 2019 Early Resolution model – counsellors may not identify areas of concern for coercion and additional training may be required
  - may require additional police training on separation (peace bonds) and other ways that coercion or manipulation may be at play in criminal complaints
  - may require mandatory training for judges
- Law Centre also seeing issues with lack of family-law experienced judges, judges in general
- Issues with Provincial Court rules
  - Gaps in rules are not properly detailed
  - Not publicly available – only available to lawyers
  - Example is forms as PDFs – no word templates available and forms need to be manually retyped or altered to be filed at registries
  - Could have “sample” forms and files available to public
- Issues with youth involvement
  - Psychological testing for “best interests of the child” is ~\$30K privately; publicly, it can take years to get such a report and children may “age out” of the childhood range during this time
  - In the system, youth don't really have a say, it's about third parties making decisions on what is best for them and there is no one system the judiciary use for making that determination

Chair Little thanked the representatives for their insightful presentation today.

J. Bateman will follow up with Law Centre representatives about suggestions for our committee about action items

## **8. Sub-Committee Business**

VFCYJC members are asked to join a sub-committee to undertake initiatives determined by each sub-committee with oversight by the VFCYJC membership.

### **8.1. Priorities and Grants (Marcie McLean)**

Sub-committee Chair McLean provided a verbal update on the progress of two grants,

1. A grant application was received from The Village Initiative mid December but was later retracted as they had an alternate funding source.

2. Sanctuary Youth Centre (Sanctuary), received their approved VFCYJC grant funding of \$3,000.00 in July 2023 to be used for their Wellness Wednesday Program.

- In Oct. and Dec. 2023 Chair McLean emailed the Executive Director 2 letters to remind him of the Terms and Conditions, and the Condition of Funding of the Grant, and information of 3 upcoming VFCYJC meetings for the required brief written summary report of outcomes of the project. On Dec. 17, 2023 by email the applicant apologized for the delay and indicated “he will respond with a report by the end of next week.”
- On Dec. 22, the Executive Director wrote his report on progress was “that due to a combination of unforeseen circumstances and other factors we were not able to acquire curriculum or skill training materials as indicated in our grant application. He posed questions as to options available to them.”
- On Dec. 28 he wrote again informing me of Sanctuary staff absences and indicated he has begun to explore and find options for a curriculum.”
- Jan. 12, 2024 an email was sent to the Executive Director inquiring about Sanctuary’s plans to fulfill the terms of the Grant and could they be developed in a timely manner?
- On Jan. 24, 2024 an email was received indicating that the executive Director was on sabbatical. On Jan.25, 2024 an email was received with an update letter from Sanctuary’s Wellness Specialist on behalf of the absent Executive Director, her letter advised that Sanctuary had purchased and received the curriculum materials just this week with grant funds of \$2,877.06. And, ideally they could expect the youth to attend a weekly or twice weekly educational support group to tend to their traumatic histories and develop health coping skills and adequate life skills to assist them in their continued maturation and development into adulthood. A photo of the books etc. was provided.
- It appears that Sanctuary intends to complete the Wellness Wednesday program in due course.

## **8.2. Capital Region Action Team for Sexually Exploited Youth (Bill McElroy)**

### ***Notes from the February 17, 2024 Graphic Novel Sub-Committee***

1. *Call to Order at 12:05. Attendance: Marilyn, Bill, Rose, Sage. Regrets, Bella, Sonia*
2. *Bill introduced the attendees and said the purpose of this sub-committee was to move the Graphic Novel project forward, as it has been on hold for about 3 years. Bill outlined the reason we were considering a graphic novel. When presentations are made at schools, we have been handing out a contact list of organizations that can support youth and families, if they need more info about the Sexual Exploitation of youth. It was felt that very few of those lists made it home. We thought that having a graphic novel would be something that could be handed out and would be something that youth would keep and possibly be taken home and discussed with parents. Because of Covid, this project has been on hold, as have presentations made to students and community groups. It is time to get this going again, and Bill, Marilyn, Rose, Sonia, Bella volunteered to sit on a subcommittee to move this project forward. The ideal time for such a meeting would be 3ish in the afternoon, during a weekday. No preference for a specific day. Bill reported that he had met a graphic artist and had a chance to review her work. That person would be part of the working group. He informed the group that Sage was an artist who had experience with graphic novels.*
3. *Sage shared some of her work in drawing graphic novels and offered some ideas. The first priority is to get a script ready.*
4. *After some discussion, the following agreed to do some follow up for the next meeting:*

1. *Bill will contact Mia and Gord to find out the top issues they are dealing with at this time.*
  2. *Sage will do some research into existing graphic novels around the issue of sexual exploitation of children and youth.*
  3. *Rose will contact some youth serving agencies to determine what they are experiencing with the youth they work with.*
- Next meeting: March 2, 12 noon, Google Meet.  
Notes taken by Bill McElroy*

### **8.3. Family and Youth Matters (Rose Stanton) 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey Provincial Report Launch**

R. Stanton provided an update and share a link to the Adolescent Health Survey:  
[https://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/savethedate\\_2023BCAHSreportlaunch.pdf](https://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/savethedate_2023BCAHSreportlaunch.pdf)

### **8.4. Court Watch (Marie-Terese Little)**

There was no update.

### **8.5. Communications (Jeff Bateman)-**

J. Bateman emailed a letter to Attorney General Sharma to ask availability to speak at an Open House in May. Cathy Peters will speak to VFCYJC in the fall. A representative from the Foundry will speak at our April 25 VFCYJC Meeting.

### **9. Treasurer's Report (Esther Paterson)**

There was no report.

### **10. New Business**

#### **10.1. VFCYJC 2024 Orientation (Marie-Terese Little, Steve Carey)**

Chair M. T. Little and S. Carey provided a Power Point presentation, and it will be emailed out to committee members.

Chair Little emphasized the need to connect with agencies and First Nations. Agencies are struggling out there.

#### **10.2. Discussion re: Court Watch responsibilities to be undertaken by a third party, i.e. UVic Legal Centre**

UVic Legal Centre is not in a position to undertake responsibilities of the Court Watch subcommittee. They would be interested in coming back once or twice a year. The students are only there for 3 months. VFCYJC will keep in touch with them.

#### **10.3. CRD Update – Recruitment of CRD citizen appointees, application deadline Feb. 26**

Sooke and Saanich have retweeted this information which we appreciate. The deadline has been extended to April 1. There is interest but the stumbling block is that qualified individuals are short on time and resources.

**10.4. VFCYJC Open House 2024 + Advance Planning + Request submitted to Attorney General Niki Sharma.**

There was no update.

**10.5. MYST Update – 2024 funding status + VFCYJC Jan. 25 motion offering optional financial assistance to CRED/MYST for an SROI analysis + True Blue Podcast link + Gord Magee MYST backgrounder.**

The VFCYJC's offer of a \$5,000 grant has been accepted by Pacific Centre Family Services Association and they will develop a business plan for future years. More information to come at a future meeting.

**10.6. Location and Dates of Upcoming Meetings**

April 25, May 23, June 27, Sept. 26, Oct. 24, Nov. 28, 2024, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the CRD Boardroom and via Zoom unless otherwise notified.

**11. Notice(s) of Motion**

There were no notice(s) of motion.

**12. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

**13. No Roundtable [time permitting]**

There was no roundtable.

**14. Adjournment**

**MOVED by E. Paterson, SECONDED by K. Guiry,  
That the February 22, 2024 Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee meeting be  
adjourned at 1:18 pm.  
CARRIED**