

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA) FOR CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **CASA for Children of Greater Victoria Society AGM Report, 2013**
- **CASA Society update, 2015**
- **CASA Society final board meeting, 2016**

CASA became a subcommittee of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee in 2010, modeled after the U.S. CASA and ceased operations as a separate entity as of June, 2016, resulting in the dissolution of the VFCYC CASA Sub-committee



**CASA FOR CHILDREN OF
GREATER VICTORIA SOCIETY**

2nd AGM REPORT

February 12, 2013



MISSION STATEMENT

To advocate on behalf of a child in need of protection or at risk of needing protection, when appointed by the Court to do so, by ensuring the child's voice and views are heard and their best interests advanced with the goal of improving their circumstances.



CASA for Children of Greater Victoria Society
2nd Annual General Meeting
ABC Restaurant
February 12, 2013

AGENDA

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| 1. | Opening remarks | Georgia Peters |
| 2. | Regrets | Georgia Peters |
| 3. | Approval of minutes of previous AGM of June 16/12 | Georgia Peters |
| 4. | Matters arising from the minutes | Georgia Peters |
| 5. | Presentation of Chair's report | Georgia Peters |
| 6. | Approval of Chair's Report | Members |
| 7. | Treasurer's report | Nancy Leal |
| 8. | Confirmation of Officers | Georgia Peters |
| 9. | Motions to be put to the AGM | Members |
| 10. | Closing remarks | Georgia Peters |

PLEASE NOTE: This will be an AGM meeting only. The next meeting will be a working meeting with assigned tasks and strategy planning, based on info I hope to have available then. Georgia





CASA for Children

CHAIR'S REPORT

Welcome to CASA's year in review. The following is an outline of where CASA is as of December 31, 2012 and the steps we have taken to establish CASA as the first Court Appointed Special Advocates Society in Canada.

CASA remains a subcommittee of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee. This relationship, supported through a Memorandum of Agreement, permits CASA for Children to apply for funding as a 'registered donee' for purposes of the Income Tax Act and satisfies requirements with the Canada Revenue Agency to be able to issue tax receipts. Along with the assistance of the financial managers of the CRD a process has been established for donations, issuance of tax receipts and payout to us. We will continue to apply for formal charitable status as well.

We were admitted as a provisional member of the US National CASA organization on January 18, 2011, which entitles us to use all of their training materials and attend all their on-line webinars and forums. On April 8, 2011 we incorporated as a registered non-profit under the title "CASA for Children of Greater Victoria Society". CASA became a member of First Call, a provincial coalition of child and family service providers. Thereafter CASA attends, via conference calls, monthly roundtable discussions on topics highly relevant to children and youth at risk. CASA also is a 'provisional' member of the Federation of Community Social Services Agencies, another provincial organization that provides services to not for profit agencies.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING TO GET ESTABLISHED?

We continue to meet with senior policy advisors of the Ministry of Children and Families. Funding and resources are stretched for government and non-government agencies but doors remain open for collaboration.

CASA has re-focused on windows of opportunity. For example, offering support for those youth transitioning out of care. Recent attention has recognized this population as being significantly underserved and thus more vulnerable. Ministry officials also recognize this as an area of concern. As a result CASA reworked their budget to reflect this shift, which resulted in the need for fewer funds.

We have developed administrative forms for recruitment of volunteers and board members and board binders for new directors, which contain all relevant CASA documents. Applications to serve on board were distributed and board members have been recruited. Members developed a Website with the assistance of Honeycomb Web Designs. You can access our site at casaforchildren.ca.

CASA board members have begun to customize the National CASA training materials to ensure they reflect the Canadian, and provincial content as well as ensuring they reflect cultural sensitivities. Assistance from professional organizations and the University of Victoria will help in the process.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Caring For First Nations Society:

We continue to liaise with the Caring for First Nations Society on issues of mutual concern, and training materials will be vetted to ensure cultural competence. As funding requests to assist in this process were not granted, CASA needs to look at ways to achieve the desired result with available, severely restricted funds.

Victoria Native Friendship Center: CASA met with the ED, Bruce Parisien, who is interested in the CASA approach and he provided CASA boardroom meeting space for free. Ongoing discussions will take place to foster opportunities for the Center and CASA to collaborate on issues of mutual concern regarding children in care.

Administrative and Chief Judge of the Provincial Court: Casa met with the local administrative Judge, Adrian Brooks. As a member of the FCYJC, CASA was interested to know if there was a formal process for the committee to report issues of concern to the courts regarding youth at risk. CASA also wanted to keep the courts informed on its progress and have the opportunity to meet with the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court to introduce CASA. 2012 was a particularly stretched time for the provincial courts and it was suggested that a better time frame to take up this discussion would be in early 2013.

Federation of BC youth in Care Network: CASA has been working with this umbrella organization to assist in the establishment of a 'local' here in Victoria. A local requires a mentor organization to offer space to this group of in-care/out of care youth, by providing them a place to 'chill', hash out issues, take leadership roles and essentially take responsibility for aspects of their future. A number of youth have come forward to work on this project. CASA sought funding and a small grant was received from the Lex Reynolds Permanency and Adoption fund. The Burnside Gorge Community Center offered to act as a mentor sponsor, initially to assist the youth in the process.

Youth Gang Prevention Grant: Georgia was involved in the initial application for this grant, along with a number of invited school and community service groups, to help craft the application. Georgia will remain on the steering committee for this proposal.

Funding

Casa has been fortunate to receive some small grants, from the Municipality of Metchosin, the Family Court and Youth Justice Committee, The Victoria Foundation and The Alpha Theta Sorority. Casa continues to apply for larger sums while identifying areas where costs can be shaved through partnerships with similar serving agencies.

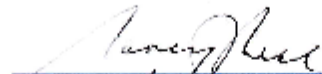
Georgia Peters
Chair

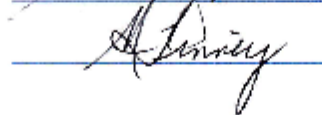
CASA For Children of Greater Victoria
Financial Position
As at December 31st 2012

Balance forward from 2011		897.43
REVENUE		
District of Metchosin	900.00	
Lex Reynold's Project	1,500.00	
Cash for Memberships	14.00	
Family Court Youth Justice (CRD Grant)	1,488.50	
Family Court Committee	4,000.00	
Bank interest received	1.16	
Total Revenue		7,903.66
Shares		5.00
Total Assets		7,908.66
EXPENSES		
Basemetal.com Inc	27.16	
courier	25.64	
Honeycomb Webworks	144.48	
AGM - office expenses	113.50	
Honeycomb Webworks - update	112.00	
cheques & gst	43.81	
Ministry of Finance (society annual report)	40.00	
Total Expenses		-506.59
Bank Balance as at December 31, 2012		8,299.50

CASA for Children of Greater Victoria Society acknowledges the continued support of the Family Court and Youth Justice Committee

Approved by the Directors:





**Nominations for the 2013
CASA Board of Directors**

Returning Nominees:

**Janet Bauer
Shannon Buchan
Maureen Johnson
Nancy Leal
Georgia Peters
Scott Rothermel
Mary-Anne Tinney**

*Be it resolved by the Society that the returning
nominees stand for the remainder of their 2 year term.*

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Janet Bauer: *Janet has served as a volunteer with Greater Victoria Police Victim Services for 3 years. She also served as a volunteer and a paid parent educator with LIFE Seminars for 10 years. She has had both personal and hands on experience with the youth justice system and with youth in care. She is trained as an adult educator and has worked in that field for over 25 years.*

Shannon Buchan: *Shannon is a retired family law practitioner, who acted exclusively for parents who had children apprehended.*

Maureen Johnson (Treasurer): *Maureen is a former administrative assistant and current volunteer with Greater Victoria Police Victim Services and has served them for 7 years. She served as Treasurer for Victoria Restorative Justice Society for 3 years and as a City of Victoria committee member on The Family Court and Youth Justice Committee for 2 terms. She recently became a board member of the John Howard Society of Victoria. Maureen worked with youth in her church and accompanied them on various outreaches within BC and Mexico.*

Nancy Leal : *Nancy is a retired family physician with an interest in youth in care issues.*

Georgia Peters (Chair): *Georgia is a retired crown prosecutor with over 35 years of experience working within both the criminal and civil justice systems. Georgia has a particular interest in working with child exploitation and family violence issues.*

Scott Rothermel : *Scott is an RCMP member who has stepped out of active duty to act as school liaison and youth engagement officer in School district 62.*

Mary-Anne Tinney: *Mary-Anne has served as a classroom teacher, child care worker, clinical counselor, special care foster parent, victim service worker and parent for close to 40 years. She has been involved in the care of children and planning for their welfare. Currently, as a Victim Services Program Coordinator, she trains and supervises adult volunteers who provide crisis support and court support, as needed, to children youth, adult and senior victims of crime and other traumatic events.*



CASA For Children of Greater Victoria Society Update 2015

History-CASAFORCHILDREN grew out of an initiative by members taking part in a Leadership Victoria program between 2008 to 2009. Through their research the group found significant gaps in BC's child welfare system and thought an approach similar in kind to one developed in the 70's by a Judge in the US would help improve the outcomes for abused and neglected children and youth. see casaforchildren.org.

At the conclusion of the Leadership program two individuals remained with the project, established a steering committee and recruited other community members with the goal of attempting to establish a similar program in Victoria. The current chair of CASA was recruited at that time, though most of the original participants have moved on. The next few years were spent meeting the requirements for 'provisional acceptance' by National CASA USA to be recognized as an international affiliate, setting up a website, recruiting volunteers and board members and seeking funding, and becoming a subcommittee of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee. Despite numerous applications for funding, grants were not enough to fund a two year pilot. Government austerity crippled some existing 'not for profits' and funding for new initiatives was greatly reduced, hence by 2013 CASA looked for other ways to advance advocacy for children. CASAFOR CHILDREN became a member of First Call and participated in advocating for issues in common, one such was the repeal of legislation permitting the Government to claw back child maintenance payments from parents on income assistance. Another was the involvement by the Board chair in a case before the courts. This case had all the markings of how things should not happen. More recently the Board chair along with local lawyers involved daily in child protection proceedings, have publicly raised concerns about the ongoing neglect of attention to a system that is not delivering on its stated mandate, that is to protect children from harm. The Board chair uses the opportunity as chair of the CASA subcommittee of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee to raise awareness of the deficiencies through court watch initiatives, speakers or literature reviews, while networking and collaborating wherever possible to ensure advocacy for children is not overlooked. Recently the Board chair was involved in child advocacy training for social workers who will work in 'delegated agencies, ie those agencies involved with First Nations families. The chair will also attend in Vancouver in the early spring of 2016 to participate in similar training, along with counsel who acts for parents in child protection proceedings, at the request of the Indigenous Perspectives Society.

Where does CASA go from here

The Board has decided to wait and see what opportunities arise from the recent 'Call to Action' by members of the local bar. There are many ways to advocate for children and it might not need to adhere strictly to the US model, ie have an advocate appointed by the Court. Providing resource information to counsel who take on these cases and ensuring follow up with the parents can help relieve the burden on counsel with parents and children as benefactors, advocating for the

CASA For Children of Greater Victoria Society

Board Meeting Nov. 18/16

Present: Maureen Johnson, Shannon Buchan, chair Georgia Peters

Purpose of meeting- to determine the future of the Society

Background

Georgia outlined recent efforts to date to align with a like minded agency as sufficient funding to enable CASA to be self sufficient has not been forthcoming. Advocacy for children in a manner similar to the US model has not been achieved though individual efforts in specific cases has been beneficial. Shannon and Georgia contributed significantly to the Call to Action by the local legal bar to improve outcomes for children removed by the Ministry. That initiative lead by Diane Turner QC has yet to receive the traction hoped for though Georgia continues to offer resource identification and information to assist parent's counsel but again that has been a slow process. Georgia working through the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee was able to have them endorse a resolution asking the Government to adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when legislation, policy or procedure impacted children and youth.

It was agreed that a final decision would be made early in the new year in the hope that networking efforts would result in CASA partnering of collaboration with an existing agency to provide or augment advocacy for children in care.

Maureen Johnson the treasurer decided to step down and handed the files to Georgia to take over. Georgia will need to attend to Coast Capital, where CASA's banking is held and sign the documents to be added as a signatory.

Addendum – April 4/16

Little has changed since Nov.18/16 so Georgia and Shannon decided to wind down CASA, and have the remaining funds of approximately \$5,000.00 transferred to the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee to be used for child advocacy through that forum. As Georgia chairs the Court watch committee she is in a position to know of areas that may benefit from small funding initiatives.