

Chapter 14

Mosquito Advocacy: Change Promotion Strategies for Small Groups with Big Ideas

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First Nations children are dramatically over-represented in the Canadian child welfare system, and there is significant documentation that inequities in child welfare funding on reserves are a contributing factor. Traditional public policy change strategies were tried for over a decade, but Canada failed to implement solutions jointly developed with First Nations (McDonald and Ladd 2000, Loxley et al. 2005), or to fully implement recommendations made by the Auditor General of Canada (2008). First Nations children and their families continued to suffer, and there was little hope that continued discussions with Canada would yield substantive progress. In 2007, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (the Caring Society, a small four-person organization working for First Nations children) and the Assembly of First Nations filed a human rights case against the Canadian Government alleging that long-standing funding inequities in child welfare amounted to racial discrimination against First Nations children (Blackstock 2011). When the case was filed, about 20 supporters attended a news conference. Five years later, court rooms were overrun with people coming to watch the case, over 10,000 people and organizations from across the world were following the case online, and thousands of Canadian children were marching on Canadian legislatures and parliament demanding equity. The success was achieved through the development, implementation, and refinement of mosquito advocacy. Mosquito advocacy was developed at the Caring Society because of the urgent need for holistic peaceful public policy tools that equip small groups to effectively take on the big guys (in this case government) to advocate for evidence-based policy in change-resistant environments. Although existing literature provided some guidance on individual strategies and considerations, there was no comprehensive road map for advancing public policy with resistant colonial-based governments.

Amongst First Nations, the tiny mosquito has a legendary ability to tackle larger animals and people (Simpson 2010, *Manitoba Pageant* 1962). The mosquito advocacy approach leverages evidence-based solutions grounded in peaceful First Nations values, and is inspired by the following mosquito-like characteristics: 1) small and agile; 2) goal oriented; 3) infectious; 4) buzzing; 5) swarming; and 6) biting (using peaceful non-voluntary change techniques). This chapter begins by describing the need for peaceful alternatives to the “talking with government” approach to public policy, before describing how long-standing inequities in First

Nations child welfare led to the development of the mosquito advocacy approach. The next section addresses how peaceful values, proper risk assessment, and evidence-based public policy solutions shape mosquito advocacy strategies and implementation. Finally, implications for mosquito advocacy in other sectors and movements are discussed.

The Emergence of Mosquito Advocacy

Flawed and inequitable federal government policies are at the headwaters of systemic poverty, poor housing, and inequitable service access on First Nations reserves, undermining the safety and well-being of children. While other groups are also influenced by government agendas, First Nations are more deeply pressured because of the Canadian government's central role in colonialism (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996), the Indian Act, funding and regulation of First Nations communities (Auditor General of Canada 2008, 2011), and troubled treaty and self-government relationships (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996).

Restrictions placed on First Nations child and family service agencies by the Federal Government contribute to how these multiple pressures affect First Nations citizens. First Nations child and family service agencies provide child welfare services to children, young people, and families residing on First Nations reserves. The federal government exercises control over the agencies by, amongst other requirements, obliging the agencies to follow provincial/territorial child welfare laws in lieu of traditional forms of governance. The federal government provides funding to First Nations child and family service agencies while provincial/territorial governments fund the same services off reserves.

Research indicates that First Nations child and family service agencies serve a higher-needs population (Sinha et al. 2011) with inequitable funding from the federal government. The Auditor General of Canada (2008) estimates that First Nations children are six to eight times more likely to be placed in child welfare care than other children. The factors contributing to the dramatic over-representation are poverty, poor housing, and substance misuse (Blackstock 2003, Trocmé et al. 2004). There are promising culturally based solutions available to mediate these factors, but First Nations child and family service agencies are constrained by provincial/territorial laws (Harris-Short 2012) and inequitable and flawed federal government funding regimes (McDonald and Ladd 2000, Loxley et al. 2005, Auditor General of Canada 2008, 2011, Standing Committee on Public Accounts 2009).

For over 10 years, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the national political organization representing First Nations in Canada, worked with the federal government to document inequities in child and family services funding on reserves and to propose solutions (Loxley et al. 2005), but the federal government failed to implement the needed changes. As talks continued between AFN and

the federal government, Canada's own data showed that the numbers of First Nations children going into care between 1995 and 2001 rose a shocking 71.5 percent (McKenzie 2002). By 2006, it was clear to First Nations that talking with the government in the absence of meaningful, measurable progress at the community level had devastating implications for children (Blackstock 2011). In response, change strategies were developed that go beyond relying on the federal government's voluntary change motivation. I term these peaceful strategies "non-voluntary advocacy." A new era of First Nations child rights activism was about to emerge; this activism moved from the negotiating table with the government to public education, public engagement, and the Courts. The consequences for the Assembly of First Nations and the Caring Society would be vast. A key question facing both organizations was how they could effectively explore non-voluntary advocacy options with Canada's federal government and still operate. Most First Nations and national First Nations organizations are small scale, and many receive the majority of their funding from the federal government. At the time, this was certainly the case for the Assembly of First Nations. The Caring Society had a more diversified funding base, but still received federal funding. Implementing non-voluntary advocacy would test the limits of what both organizations were prepared to risk for the people they served, and the willingness of a democratically elected government to fund evidence-based dissent.

As a political organization, the Assembly of First Nations utilized political and legal processes to advance the complaint. As a non-political co-complainant, the Caring Society needed effective and peaceful non-voluntary advocacy options suited for this particular change context: 1) a small organization tackling a large and powerful one; 2) a largely misinformed public and Parliament whose views of First Nations are influenced by colonialism; and 3) probable funding cuts from governments who disagreed with our approaches could mean resource constraints or even closure of the Caring Society. A review of the literature on social movements, public policy, and activism revealed inspirational ideas (Bryce 1922, Lakoff 2004, Needleman 2007, Kidder 2003), but no road map. Innovation was required. The mosquito emerged as a premium example of where something very small, but enthusiastic, effectively challenges large and resistant entities. Mosquitoes are goal orientated, infectious, and persistent. They swarm and come from all directions, and some will bite, leaving a welt that itches for days as a lasting reminder of its presence. Experimentation with these strategies, and consultation with leading First Nations and non-Aboriginal advocates, emboldened the Caring Society to apply mosquito advocacy, and led to its application across disciplines to address inequities in education and health. The following section describes mosquito advocacy in action, using the funding inequities in First Nations child and family services as a case study.

The Advantage of being Small

Large organizations, particularly governments, often organize themselves into bureaucracies. Policies are often decided by those at the top of the organization, and the role of the other members is to implement the goals and protect those at the top from risks, such as financial losses, or losses in public confidence. They leverage their significant public influence and human and financial resources to set and implement public policy.

The mosquito's traits are instructive for small organizations or groups taking on large organizations. The mosquito is extremely small, and yet it regularly takes on much larger species and wins. The mosquito's small size means it is much more agile and quicker than its larger opponent. It can innovate and adapt to new environments much faster than a larger species that requires more resources to survive. There is no way for small groups to match the characteristics of large organizations in public policy advocacy. The real opportunity is to leverage the characteristic of being small. What small organizations lack in financial and human resources, they often make up for in their grassroots appeal, creativity, and enthusiasm. Being small means that when new situations arise, the organization can make decisions and act quickly, outpacing the lumbering bureaucratic processes of government. Additionally, small groups have less to lose than their larger opponents, and small groups acting in moral and ethical ways against a large opponent tend to evoke more public sympathy.

A case known as the "McLibel" case is instructive for small groups challenging the policies and practices of large organizations (Vidal 1997). In England, Dave Morris, a postal worker, and Helen Steel, a gardener, started handing out pamphlets arguing, among other things, that McDonald's Corporation had unfair labor practices and was contributing to environmental degradation (BBC 2005). McDonald's filed a legal action, claiming damages for libel, and thereby initiating the longest legal case in British history (Vidal 1997). Public sympathy and attention quickly mounted in Dave and Helen's favor, as images of these grassroots citizens defending themselves in court with their home-made signs against a plethora of well-paid corporate lawyers and executives filled newspapers and television screens. McDonald's mounted legal and public relations strategies to thwart the case and deplete the defendants' resources. The strategies backfired. As McDonald's was spending millions of pounds on its legal costs and generating a public relations fiasco, Dave and Helen were defending themselves, so had no legal costs, and were enjoying growing public support (Vidal 1997). Although McDonald's won the legal case, the David and Goliath nature of the battle created a public relations nightmare for them. The public was so enraged that when the Court found against Dave and Helen (in some, but not all respects), and ordered them to pay financial damages, McDonald's quickly announced they would not collect (Vidal 1997).

Dave and Helen were successful precisely because of their small grassroots approach. From the outset, they understood that the public was in the best position

to motivate McDonald's to change its policies, since McDonald's depended on consumers to buy its products and keep it in business. They framed their message in ways the public could relate to, and then skillfully positioned their lack of resources against the much bigger McDonald's, securing public support and putting enormous pressure on the corporation. Additionally, even though McDonald's had a lot more to spend, Dave and Helen understood that they also had a lot more to lose. Large organizations like corporations or governments rely on the public to buy products/services or vote for them. Their large size means that they get noticed in the press for things they do right and things they do wrong. The last thing they want is to be held accountable by a couple of people who have nothing to lose, and whose arguments and character have a lot of public appeal.

Likewise, the Caring Society is a four-person organization operating on an annual budget of less than \$400,000, whereas Canada has over a quarter of a million employees and a budget in the trillions. We leverage our small size in public relations and in our ability to respond quickly and creatively to new situations. For example, when each court date occurs, we invite hundreds of people, particularly children, to watch Canada making its arguments against the equitable treatment of children. As in the "McLibel" case, public sympathy has overwhelmingly favored the cause represented by the small, grassroots organization: in our case, overwhelmingly in favor of equity for First Nations.

In my view, small, persistent groups bound by peaceful values and evidence-based ideas are the most potent proponents of public policy change with large organizations. The best thing for small groups to do in a policy conflict with larger organizations is to act like a mosquito: embrace being small by leveraging creativity, grassroots appeal, lower risk exposure, and an ability to make decisions quickly.

Peaceful Values Matter

Successful policy-change movements create broad-based appeal by embedding policy change objectives and strategies in deeply held human values such as fairness, justice, democracy, and honesty, and by expressing these values in peaceful ways. The public credibility of the movement will depend on the coherence between the movement's values, and the actions of everyone acting in the name of the movement.

In an ideal world, all public policy players would play fair, but the reality is quite different. It is not unusual for governments to use unfair and aggressive tactics to derail policy change advocates who get in their way. The best response to these tactics is to make them public and respond with grace and respect. Appealing to the public when a change movement comes under attack will only work if the movement itself is working in accordance with public values. The old saying "people in glass houses should not throw stones" applies in public policy change, just as it does in life.

Those committed to changing public policy in the face of strong resistance by powerful and well-funded organizations must be willing to take personal and professional risks. They must honestly assess risks for themselves and, more importantly, for the movement. They must also assess the risks to the government or corporation that has the power to change the policy. Kidder (2003) sets out two forms of courage that help inform personal and organizational risk analysis: physical courage and moral courage. Whereas physical courage is typically rewarded in society, moral courage is often punished and framed as insubordination, unpatriotic, blowing the whistle, or rocking the boat. Moral courage is the act of standing up for your values in risky situations. Kidder (2003) argues that people are more likely to be morally courageous when there is a direct benefit for themselves or others close to them. Evaluating the moral courage of the movement and the organizations/individuals associated with it informs what change strategies can be implemented. Thinking back on “McLibel,” it is clear that Helen and Dave were not only morally courageous, but also had the endurance to put up with the long-term nature of the resistance. While McDonald’s also presented long-term resistance, most would agree that the values they were upholding had more to do with managing their corporate image than upholding moral courage or the public good (Vidal 1997).

The Caring Society has also had to be morally coherent and courageous in the face of significant pushback from the Canadian Government in the child welfare human rights case. The Caring Society survived the loss of federal funding and other pushback strategies by the federal government, such as their intense monitoring of my (the Director’s) public and personal life in an effort to find “other motives” for the child welfare case (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2011). Our strict adherence to our strong values, and our willingness to publicize the government’s tactics, and to not reciprocate in kind, were major factors in our survival.

Conflict of interest guidelines are an important part of organizational value coherence. While organizations, like people, tend to take active roles in public policy change because the issue appeals to them, it is important to avoid making self-interest a leading motivation for public policy change. For example, if the Caring Society is successful in the child welfare human rights case, other than the repayment of legal fees, there will be no financial benefits to the organization—all the funds will go to help address the inequity for the children. The Caring Society is an important policy advocate, but we are not the beneficiaries; this avoids problems with conflict of interest.

While not all policy change movements will encounter the significant resistance experienced in the “McLibel” or Caring Society cases, the success of all movements is dependent on value coherence, a conscious assessment of risk, and the moral courage to endure pushback with grace and respect.

The First Domino Solution

Mosquito-based advocacy is anchored in evidence-based solutions termed “first domino” solutions. First domino solutions are not intended to solve all the problems, but rather to make solving the problems possible. For example, First Nations children face many risk factors, and a small organization like the Caring Society could spend time trying to develop evidence-based solutions to each. However, this approach would dramatically exceed our capacity and resources. Instead, we define the first domino solutions as making equitable, evidence-based and culturally based resources available to First Nations communities to implement their own best solutions for children. In the child welfare case, the appeal for culturally based and equitable funding is grounded in good research (Trocmé et al. 2004), joint reports with government (McDonald and Ladd 2000, Loxley et al. 2005), and ongoing consultations with First Nations.

Before initiating a change action, responsible advocates must conduct a thorough review of the literature, consult with experts and intended movement beneficiaries, and thoughtfully consider contrary positions to better understand the problem and best determine the specific courses of action. If research is not available, competent researchers should be engaged. It is also highly valuable to have the research peer-reviewed, and to have it independently assessed by watchdogs like the Auditor General, legislative committees, and leading experts and organizations in the field.

Notice that this section focuses on *the* first domino solution and not *a* first domino problem. The reason for this is that it is essential that policy advocates share in the responsibility to credibly document policy problems, create solutions, and to try to work with governments and others to address the issue. Moreover, the public engagement is much easier when you are asking people to stand *for* something versus *against* something. Having identified the first domino solution, the next step is to make it understandable to the wide variety of partners you will need to engage in your mosquito advocacy swarm.

Infectious Message: Framing the Problem and Solution

A movement “going viral” in mosquito advocacy involves framing the first domino solution in a way that is easy for both experts in your field and the public to understand and relate to. A basic understanding of linguistics is useful in this regard. Lakoff (2004) argues that people organize language based on deep cognitive frames grounded in fundamental national values and social structures. Social movement leaders such as Gandhi, King, and Mandela embedded their messages in concepts of freedom, fairness, and justice. The fact that these values were already widely shared amongst the populations in each country gave their messages an infectious quality, and made it difficult for opponents to argue against.

Lakoff (2004) also suggests staying away from using the language of the opposing side, as you can actually reinforce their message by arguing against it. The title of Lakoff's (2004) book, *Don't Think of an Elephant*, takes its name from the idiom "name an animal, but don't think of an elephant." By mentioning the elephant, the speaker makes thinking of other options very difficult. In the social justice field, groups often make the mistake of centering their communications materials on the language of incoming governments to make their proposals more appealing. Progressive social movements should develop their own messaging framed by deeply held national values.

Jordan's Principle is an example of how the Caring Society put Lakoff's work into action. First Nations children are often denied, or delayed receipt of, services available to other children because the federal and provincial/territorial governments constantly battle over who is responsible for paying for services on reserves. Government documents frame this as a jurisdictional issue rooted in confusion about the division of powers between Federal and Provincial governments regarding service delivery. Successive governments have avoided addressing the problem by framing it in ways that make the issue difficult to understand, and by disregarding the impacts on children. The Caring Society reframed this issue to demonstrate the impacts on children by showing how the Government's jurisdictional squabbles affected the life of one child in particular.

Jordan River Anderson, namesake of Jordan's Principle, was from Norway House Cree Nation, and he spent over two years unnecessarily in a hospital waiting for the Province of Manitoba and the federal government to resolve a payment dispute relating to his at-home care. Tragically, Jordan died before the dispute was resolved. By simplifying and personalizing the problem, and by proposing a solution, Jordan's Principle created a message that centers on social justice, and provides a clear framework for resolving the issue. Jordan's Principle says that when a government service is available to all other children and a jurisdictional dispute arises, the government of first contact pays for the service and then argues about payment as a secondary concern (Blackstock 2011).

This principle was unanimously supported in Canada's House of Commons on December 12, 2007 (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2007). Canadian values of fairness and equality, and a general disdain for government red tape, underlie the framing of Jordan's Principle. It is also important to note that Jordan's Principle proposes a simple solution that resolves the problem for the child. Jordan's Principle is easy to understand and for Canadians to embrace. We provide an opportunity for people of all ages and organizations to learn more and express support for Jordan's Principle in an online statement of support at www.jordansprinciple.ca. We have found it important to not only heighten awareness of the problems, but also to actively engage Canadians in cost-free ways to advance the solutions. The online statement is a public display of the breadth and depth of support for Jordan's Principle, making it difficult for the government to sideline the issue as a special-interest concern.

The Buzz: Make Beautiful Noise and Choose an Effective Spokesperson

One of the most effective strategies mosquitoes use is making that irritating sound. Social activists need to do the same thing, and make sure it is as constant as possible; but the sound must be credible, evidence-based, and grounded in peaceful values and actions. Storytelling is an excellent way to deliver messages, but the stories must be relevant and fact-based. If using multiple stories, they must build on one another to contribute to the main argument. In other work, I have argued that less is more when it comes to public speaking (Blackstock 2009), and it is important to pay attention to the audience and speaking forum. It is also crucial to map out key dates and current events that coincide with the goal of the movement; this helps to create an environment favorable to the advocacy message. A favorable environment is also nurtured by working collaboratively with partners to stage communications strategies that keep the message in the public eye as much as possible.

Identifying a skilled spokesperson for the movement is essential. It is hard to imagine the African-American civil rights movement without Dr Martin Luther King Jr.'s eloquence and leadership at the center. It is the same with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa led by Mandela, and Gandhi's emancipation movement in India. In my view, long-term effective social movements need at least one spokesperson and leader who is an eloquent and credible public figure. Choosing this person or persons carefully is essential. The person should have a natural passion for the issue, provide excellent leadership, be analytical, possess great communication skills, live their life by the values of the movement, be seen as credible, have humility, and be courageous. This person will likely become the lightning rod for any resistance, and it is essential, therefore, that they be above reproach and be willing to accept risks. This may sound like a difficult task, but in most small groups there are usually one or more people who can speak clearly, credibly, and passionately about the policy issue.

Great orators help instruct the rest of us about how to think carefully about the key message we want an audience to walk away with. They research the issue, giving due consideration to possible rebuttals from opposing sides. This promotes accountability and credibility. Orators should not avoid confronting legitimate issues contrary to their message (Cuomo 1993). The message and research are then put into a speaker's equivalent of a storyboard: an introduction to the key message; evidence framed in deep national values that builds the argument; consideration/rebuttal to contrary opinion; and a summary of the key message and what audience members can do to help (Blackstock 2009). This type of thinking is also helpful for preparing small groups to engage others to promote the first domino solution in what is termed "swarming" in the mosquito advocacy approach.

Swarming: A Role for Peoples of Every Age and Income Level

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) target the wealthy for fundraising and influence purposes. The Caring Society does the opposite. All of our campaigns are geared so that persons of low income are respected, and engaged as valued actors in building a better Canada by addressing the inequities faced by First Nations children. In our early history, the Caring Society made the mistake of doing public addresses to raise awareness of the problems facing First Nations children, and we failed to give people something specific, cost free, and meaningful they could do to help. At the time, our suggestions were broad (build relationships with local First Nations), time consuming (learn more about Aboriginal Peoples), age limiting (official petitions), and cost-ridden (donations). These created barriers for participation, and also did little to improve the situation of First Nations children. Today, we have seven free ways for caring people of all ages and organizations to make a difference in less than two minutes. Signing on to Jordan's Principle is one example. Coupling our public education with these seven easy and cost-free ways to engage all peoples has substantially improved the level of impact of our efforts. Public support for the campaigns has increased significantly. Additionally, we found that these simple, cost-free entry points make it easier for non-Aboriginal Canadians to break through the widely held stereotype that engaging with Aboriginal Peoples is complex and time consuming.

Mechanisms for encouraging engagement can also be inexpensive. For example, the Caring Society has set up a number of websites to provide information and opportunities to express support, and costs are minimal for the organization. Ongoing redesign and printing of public materials is avoided by keeping websites up to date, and by limiting public relations printed materials to the campaign name and URL.

Act Like Mosquitoes: Come from All Directions

Too often, social activists pursue only one strategy, making it easier for the opposition to quash the movement. The mosquito shows us that engaging multiple partners and multiple approaches creates a more effective social change climate. In order for partner engagement to be successful, sustainable, and growing, it is vital that partners are provided with the full evidence base so they can independently evaluate it and make an informed decision to engage in the change movement. Another vital component to respectful partner engagement is to make it easy and affordable for partners to integrate the movement goals into their core activities. The Caring Society leverages the significant evidence of the inequities for First Nations children by engaging other NGOs, professional organizations, and the media to write about the issues and promote awareness and engagement of their networks. In order to facilitate this, the Caring Society has a resource-rich website and provides partners with free printed and electronic materials with the campaign

names and URLs. For example, our partners often include campaign bookmarks in conference delegate bags or distribute campaign information on their websites, social networking sites, newsletters, or e-broadcasts.

Identifying key organizations to strategically engage in the change effort is an important consideration. The Caring Society has an ethical screen for partners and donors, and we vet for complementary value sets and aims. Whilst the Caring Society welcomes all ethically aligned organizations to join the movement, the practical reality is that some organizations and people have more influence than others. Strategic identification of powerful people and organizations to invite into the movement is an important element of any social change movement. Unexpected allies are particularly useful. In any field, there are a series of predictable actors who are usually engaged in change. The engagement of unexpected allies surprises the opposing side, and broadens the base of the movement. For example, the Caring Society is honored to have a number of non-child-focused NGOs and labor movement activists supporting its campaign, as well as influential businesses across sectors.

To Bite or Not to Bite:

The Role of Peaceful Non-Voluntary Advocacy Strategies

Voluntary evidence-based solution implementation, in cooperation with the institutions or actors holding the power to create positive change, such as governments, is ideal, but not always possible. After voluntary change actions have been exhausted, peaceful, non-voluntary change strategies (the bite) come into play. It is important to note that voluntary and non-voluntary change actions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, some change actions begin as voluntary (e.g., meeting with government to develop solutions to the problem) whilst laying track for non-voluntary strategies (e.g., legal action) if needed. For example, engaging in joint solution building with the government demonstrates good will and, if progress is not made, it can also demonstrate to the Courts that the government clearly knew about the problem and its associated public harms, collaborated in solution development, and did little or nothing to rectify the problem. The decision of whether to bite (engage in advocacy that does not rely on the voluntary action of the opposing side) should be informed by the harms related to inaction, the exhaustion of voluntary efforts, and the respective risk thresholds of the activist and the opposing side. Threatening non-voluntary strategies and not following through diminishes credibility, as does anything associated with violence or the degradation of other people or groups. Effective non-voluntary change strategies simultaneously uplift movement beneficiaries and society as a whole. For example, Martin Luther King's civil rights movement clearly advanced the freedom and equality rights of African American peoples, but it also breathed life into fundamental American values, enriching the country as a whole.

The Caring Society and Assembly of First Nations' child welfare human rights case against the Government of Canada is an example of a "biting" strategy nested in other components of mosquito advocacy. The complaint alleged that the government racially discriminates against First Nations children by providing less funding, and therefore less child welfare benefits, to children on reserves. The legal action was, and continues to be, complemented by a public education and engagement campaign called "I am a witness." This campaign involved creating a website (www.fnwitness.ca) where the legal documents of all parties are posted along with relevant reports and news articles. The website is augmented with social media, such as an "I am a witness" Facebook page and a Twitter feed, which share breaking news and developments on the case. Individuals of all ages and organizations are then invited to commit to follow (witness) the case online and attend the legal proceedings in person, before making up their own minds as to whether Canada is treating First Nations children fairly.

The "I am a witness" campaign integrates all of the key elements of mosquito advocacy. As noted earlier, there is substantial evidence of the inequality, and several evidence-based solutions exist to address the problem. The first domino solution is to ensure the Government of Canada provides First Nations children and families culturally based resource equity to care for their children. The infectious framing of the message is based on "giving First Nations children the same chance to grow up safely at home as other Canadians." We invite individuals and organizations into the swarm by providing free mechanisms for learning and engagement such as the "I am a witness" campaign and legal case hearings. As noted earlier, when the case was filed in 2007 a handful of supporters attended the news conference; but now, with the aid of mosquito advocacy, there are now over 10,500 individuals and organizations witnessing the child welfare case, making it the most formally followed legal action in Canadian history. Given the growing number of people (particularly children and youth) and media attending the ongoing hearings, the hearings have to be held in larger and larger courtrooms. Also, the case has garnered the attention of an internationally known Indigenous filmmaker who is currently preparing a documentary on the case, which will provide further opportunities for public awareness.

The case is complemented by enhanced public education and learning events such as "Have a Heart" day, which was carried out on Valentine's Day in 2012. As the Federal Court of Canada was holding a hearing on the First Nations child welfare case, over 500 First Nations and non-Aboriginal children gathered outside of the Canadian House of Parliament with Valentine's messages for Members of Parliament and the Prime Minister asking that the Canadian Government "have a heart" and ensure equity for First Nations children. Four months later, the children who attended the "Have a Heart" rally helped invite over 5,500 other children to participate in over 50 walks across Canada for First Nations children's equity.

The growing awareness of the case has also reached international human rights bodies at the United Nations who are looking at the case in light of Canada's

human rights obligations. The growing international discourse on the case creates another influential avenue of public accountability for the Canadian Government.

While the long-term impacts of mosquito advocacy in addressing the inequities First Nations children face is not known, early results are very encouraging. Research is being initiated to document the mosquito advocacy process, including the specific impacts of child engagement.

The Impacts of Mosquito Advocacy: A Work in Progress

Small groups of people throughout the world have created, and continue to create, social, economic, and political change in the face of strong resistance. Mosquito advocacy is a work in progress. This chapter suggests that proper solution definition, framing, and creative strategies inspired by the mosquito are useful considerations in change, and that we are alive to innovation and adaptation learned from others, and from our own experience. This discussion is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to highlight key considerations for those tackling systemic problems in change-resistant environments.

The most important message is one that has been shared by many before. One person, or a group of people, *can* change the world. Just ask a mosquito.

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