

Raffi's talk,
Child Honouring Luncheon at Government House.

Victoria, BC. June 29, 2006

Your Honour, dear friends,

I'm delighted to be here with you, thank you for welcoming us to Government House today and for warmly embracing the Child Honouring philosophy. On behalf of co-editor Sharna Olfman and me, our sincere thanks for this wonderful celebration of our anthology *Child Honouring: How to Turn This World Around*.

Since your visit to Mayne Island a few years ago, Child Honouring has developed in exciting new ways, thanks to the support of many individuals—a number of them here at this table—and organizations who have partnered with my triple bottom line company, Troubadour Music.

- The *Covenant for Honouring Children* has been used in UVic's teacher training courses for the last 2 years.
- The Lambrick group of schools in Victoria has embraced the Covenant as a central theme for their teachers.
- We have had successful launches of the Child Honoring anthology and CD in the US and Canada, first at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, and at the University of Victoria two weeks ago.

With this book and CD, Child Honouring is properly birthed, as a philosophy, as a way of life, and as an organizing principle for a culture of peace.

Leonard Cohen, in his song "Suzanne", wrote "There are children in the morning, they are leaning out for love, and they will lean that way forever."

Mahatma Gandhi said, if we are to put an end to war, we must start with the children. and as Nelson Mandela put it, empty rhetoric from world leaders isn't enough: we must turn this world around, for the children. (Thus the anthology subtitle, *How to Turn This World Around*.)

In this spirit, Child Honouring comes in response to a critical moment, a defining moment in human history, when our species faces a diminished future—not just from global crises like global warming, freshwater shortages, nuclear weapons, and ecosystem collapse in the oceans—but also from the developmental hazard to societal intelligence, posed by two ominous trends: a body burden of toxic compounds in every newborn, and the decline of infants' imagining capacities due to the prevalence of the video screen.

As shown in this anthology's numerous perspectives—psychology, education, diversity, economics, religion, commerce, governance, and ecology—Child Honouring is an integrated philosophy that connects the dots between person, culture, and planet.

A children-first approach to restoring community and biosphere makes good sense. why?

- it's humans who will destroy or revive the planet, not any other species.
- the very young are society's MVP, so we have a moral duty to welcome their innate intelligence into a hospitable world.
- we now know that lifelong behaviours are largely shaped by the age of four; that's why Child Honouring emphasizes the primacy of early years.

Your Honour, we in BC are among the most privileged of the human family, with our stunning scenery and abundant resources... but underneath the surface, our future too is perilous, endangered by a number of crises, some regional and some that know no borders.

Even in our affluent society, even in robust economic times,

- pandemic numbers of kids are sexually violated
- nearly 20% of children live in poverty

- their minds are assaulted by TV ads and marketing, almost from birth
- at school, they've been given Ritalin prescriptions in record numbers

- our planetary habitat is so polluted that every child now born, is born at risk.
- toxins not known 50 years ago are in their mothers' milk
- asthma, once rare, is now a common ailment in urban centres—
the kids are hard of breathing.

A societal/global malaise of this scope needs a commensurate remedy of equal scale; the unprecedented cumulative threats children face can only be addressed systemically, holistically... by connecting the dots between person, culture and planet.

That's why, Child Honouring—as a new paradigm for humane and sustainable living—is not just about children: it is a METAFRAMEWORK for all of us...

designed not to compete with but to complement the good work
being done by dedicated professionals such as we have here at this table...

In recent years, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has called for a universal ethic for the world's billions, regardless of religion, a sense of universal responsibility within our diverse human family. With the child as the most universal symbol and reality of being human, Child Honouring provides a clear expression of the Dalai Lama's simple and stunning idea.

This is the time for our species to mature into interdependence, to redesign our institutions for the greatest good of the greatest number.

Imagine the benefits to British Columbia, if in all her communities—in cities and small towns, within first nations, on islands and in the interiors—if every child was honoured from birth as blessing, as a gift to society... imagine if every young family had abundant societal support in their welcome of new life... imagine the psychological health, reduction in crime and addictions, the freed creativity, the productive ingenuity we would see in such a culture; imagine the *humanity* of such a society, one whose devotion to the presence—as well as the future—of its young earned their respect and their allegiance.

THIS is Child Honouring's overarching vision for our province, for our country, and for the nations of the world, every one of whose citizens starts out life as a child—reaching out for love. If Child Honouring is indeed an idea whose time has come, shall we make a covenant with children, shall we stand with them in restoring the diminished future to a glorious destiny we all can share?

Raffi Cavoukian
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