

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 21, 2021

Children of the Street reminds students and schools about the dangers of hyper-sexualized or hyper-masculinized Halloween costumes

PORT COQUITLAM, BC – Many students and parents are looking forward to celebrating Halloween, and are gearing up for another fun year of costume creativity when it comes to school events and trick-or-treating.

With Halloween festivities fast approaching, **Children of the Street** – a program of PLEA Community Services Society of BC – is reminding students, parents and caregivers about the pressures on children and youth to dress up for Halloween in over-sexualized or hyper-masculinized ways, and encourages parents to avoid buying Halloween costumes that glamorize gangster life, sex trafficking (forced prostitution) and sexual exploitation.

Founded in 1995, Children of the Street works collaboratively with all levels of government, law enforcement and other not-for-profit partners to protect young people, support families and offer free workshops for children, youth and adults on how to recognize the signs and take action to prevent sexual exploitation.

“While the sexy cop, sexy nurse or other costumes that capitalize on sexual stereotypes are seen as fun to some, they also cast women and other people as sexual objects, instead of competent workers, dedicated professionals, and leaders in their fields,” says Camila Jimenez, Program Manager for Children of the Street. “Likewise, the call on young men to choose costumes that are overly macho or aggressive reinforce gender stereotypes that highlight men as aggressive by nature, and women or other people as submissive, thereby making it easier for individuals and society to embrace pro-abuse beliefs.”

Jimenez applauds School District #43 for sending a letter to all parents and guardians last week about inappropriate Halloween costumes at school, including costumes that are hypersexualized or depict elements of sexual exploitation.

“We appreciate the leadership of School District #43, along with school staff, teachers and administrators throughout BC, for sending a strong message about the dangers of exploitive stereotypes for all children and youth,” says Jimenez. “We encourage parents to have honest conversations with their kids about what constitutes an inappropriate Halloween costume, and why.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant more young people are online than ever before, for school, communicating, entertainment, gaming and more. This is creating new opportunities to target children and youth - in their own homes. In July 2020, Cybertip.ca reported an 81 per cent spike over April, May and June in reports from youth who had been sexually exploited, and reports of people trying to sexually abuse children. Jimenez says these troubling trends make it more important than ever for young people to not make light of exploitation.

Children of the Street wants to remind parents and students about the importance of not wearing costumes that play into these negative social constructs.

“We want to encourage students and families to choose real-life heroes (such as healthcare workers or firefighters) and inspirational role models as costume options instead,” adds Jimenez.

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Backgrounder

Attached letter dated October 12th 2021 from Patricia Gartland, Superintendent/CEO of School District 43 to parents and guardians re: Halloween Appropriateness.

About Children of the Street

Children of the Street – a program of PLEA Community Services Society of BC – provides a solutions-focused approach to preventing the sexual exploitation of children and youth. The program offers free education and awareness workshops for youth, adults, families and those working in youth serving agencies to help them recognize, react, and respond to incidents of sexual exploitation. Annually, we facilitate over 500 workshops in approximately 30 B.C. communities with more than 25,000 participants. Children of the Street’s goal is to help create a world where children and youth are free from all forms of sexual exploitation.

For more information, visit www.childrenofthestreet.ca.

About PLEA Community Services

PLEA has been providing individualized, community-based social services throughout B.C. for more than 40 years. It delivers residential and non-residential services to children, youth, adults and families facing significant challenges in their lives. Its work spans child welfare, addictions, health, justice and community living systems. Its focus ranges from preventative – helping children and youth at-risk make good choices under challenging circumstances – to intensive – providing specialized residential services to youth, and adults who are unable to live on their own. Known for creative program development, strong community roots and helping individuals to grow and thrive, the number of lives it touches every year is counted in the tens of thousands. For more information, visit www.plea.bc.ca.

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