

A Long Wait for Change

Independent Review of Child Protection Services to
Inuit Children in Newfoundland and Labrador



Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
Newfoundland and Labrador

September 2019

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Lucas Angnatok and Edward Barbour

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Pg. 54 - Devin (Arrowhead)
Pg. 66 - Keegan (Seal)
Back Cover - Christian (Inukshuk)

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Office of the Child and Youth Advocate | September 2019
Newfoundland and Labrador



With Thanks.....

Many people have contributed to this report and I am grateful to all of you. People will learn many things from your efforts and I hope it inspires change.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to the many Inuit - young, old and in between, who have joined this conversation and shared your hopes and dreams for Inuit children and families, as well as some of your darkest moments. Your strength moves me.

Thanks to all of the communities that welcomed us with open arms and helped support this work.

I appreciate the support of Nunatsiavut Government in so many ways and for sharing our vision of an inclusive process where people could be heard. Thanks for providing Darlene Jacque, Danielle Baikie and Beverley Hunter to make this work stronger.

I truly value the participation of professionals from so many places, including the provincial and federal governments. Your conversations have enriched this work.

Sincere thanks to those in my office who dedicated themselves completely to this project:

Dr. Ken Barter, Ph.D., Project Consultant

Patricia LeGresley, MSW, Systemic Advocacy Consultant

Rosalind Squires, MSW, Systemic Advocacy Consultant

And to all other staff who played various roles in planning, consulting and reviewing files, travelling for advocacy clinics and community sessions, please know I appreciate and value your contributions.

I have been fortunate to have the capable assistance of Dr. Nathaniel Pollock, Ph.D., in analyzing the data.

Finally and most importantly, I would like to thank all the young people who spent time with us. Maybe we played volleyball in your school gym and chatted, or maybe you showed us the monkey dance and seal crawl. Perhaps you proudly recited in Inuktitut. Even though you may not be reading this, I need to thank you for telling us your story and for sharing your thoughts and ideas. You are amazing.

- Jackie Lake Kavanagh



Message from the Child and Youth Advocate

When I decided to review child protection services to Inuit children, I knew that community participation would be very important. I knew that Inuit experiences, knowledge, stories, and their ideas for change would be critical in understanding the current situation, and in developing meaningful recommendations. While my Office met and talked with many people, completed a file review and a research component, it was the personal experiences and knowledge of Inuit that would be vital. This was the central focus. However I did not know if the communities would embrace this initiative, and whether young people would share their stories and express their ideas about how their experiences and lives could be better. Inuit could hardly be blamed if they were skeptical. The choice to participate would be theirs.



My concerns were unfounded, because approximately 575 people participated in this process. At the time of writing, people were still asking to meet or speak with us. Most participants were from Labrador, but there was also participation from the island of Newfoundland and from other parts of Canada. Community participants were genuinely interested in having their voices added to the conversation. They shared stories of pain as well as hope. Their courage, in the face of a long history of adversity, racism, and oppression, continues to move me and those in my Office who have worked on this Independent Review. The experiences with the children and youth continue to touch us.

All children have a right to safety and protection. We found no argument with this in our journeys. Some people were incredibly honest about their struggles to provide a good and safe home for their children. However, the discussion always went to the importance of finding ways to keep children safe within their families, communities, and culture rather than removing them. This is perfectly reasonable. It is also widely recommended for Indigenous children.

I believe when you read this report, you will see there is an urgent need to begin to work in a different way with Inuit children and youth now. While there are specific actions that can occur to make immediate improvements in their situation and experiences, there is also a requirement to create a new vision and relationship with Inuit and may involve Nunatsiavut Government assuming responsibility for these services in the future.

Reconciliation is a much used word, but it must be recognized as a fundamental cornerstone in any plan to move forward. And this reconciliation must happen at all levels, including Inuit children and youth. If there had been any doubt, this Review has shown that the current relationship with Inuit requires healing.

I present this report with the heartfelt hope that it can be part of meaningful and constructive change. All of us owe Inuit children a better start in life.

Here is my message to those who shared difficult but valuable teachings in this process:

Nakummek, Nittunattuk sangijonnisi, amma matsuanigijasi sivullivinigijatsinit
tamânegunnaitunut sivunganiusimajunut ilinnit.

Thank you. I am honoured by your strength, and the strength and courage of your ancestors who have gone before you.

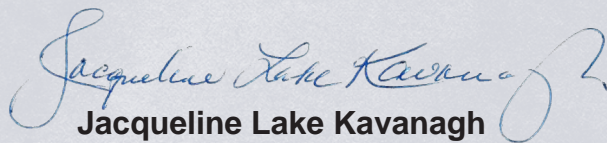

Jacqueline Lake Kavanagh
Child and Youth Advocate

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Postville

Executive Summary

Inuit children are struggling in the child protection system. When we began this Independent Review, there were 1,005 children in care in Newfoundland and Labrador. There were 345 Indigenous children, and 150 of these children were Inuit (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, 2018). Many Indigenous children have been removed from their families, communities and culture. This information is neither new, nor unique to this province. Indigenous children are critically over-represented throughout Canadian child welfare systems (National Collaborative Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). This issue is truly systemic in nature. Bold systemic change is required where young people are heard, relationships are reset, power is shared, communities are engaged, resources are enhanced, and Inuit knowledge and beliefs are validated and incorporated into new ways of keeping children safe and supported.

Bold systemic change is required where young people are heard, relationships are reset, power is shared, communities are engaged, resources are enhanced, and Inuit knowledge and beliefs are validated and incorporated into new ways of keeping children safe and supported.

We began this Independent Review after receiving a formal request from Nunatsiavut Government to investigate Inuit children's experiences in the child protection system. We shared Nunatsiavut's concern about the high numbers of children in care, as well as experiences and outcomes with other related children and youth services programs offered through the Department of Children, Seniors, and Social Development. This Department is the sole child welfare authority in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The structure of this Independent Review involved community engagement, a comprehensive file review, and a literature review. We held a number of sessions in Inuit communities where we engaged young people, parents, extended families, Elders, foster parents, community representatives and professionals to hear their experiences, and ideas for change in child protection services for Inuit children. We met or spoke with approximately 575 people. We also conducted a comprehensive file review where we selected and reviewed 213 files involving Inuit children who had active cases with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development on December 31, 2017. We ensured all Inuit communities were represented in this file review. We reviewed the following programs: In Care, Protective Intervention, Placement Resources/Foster Homes, Youth Services, and Kinship Care. We also conducted a literature review involving provincial, national and international content.

We developed the Terms of Reference in consultation with Nunatsiavut Government, and committed to the following:

1. Inquire into why the child protection system is not producing favourable outcomes for Inuit children;
2. Review policies, case management practices, and administrative practices for delivering child welfare services to Inuit children;
3. Complete research into other reviews, inquiries, and research findings on child welfare experiences in Indigenous communities, including deficiencies, best practices and recommendations;
4. Engage Inuit communities, including youth, parents, extended family, Elders, foster parents, and service providers, to identify experiences with the child protection system and to seek ideas for change;
5. Make recommendations for improved child welfare outcomes for Inuit children and youth within an appropriate cultural context; and,
6. Report back to communities on findings and recommendations.

Young people in care told us they miss home terribly, and fear losing their cultural connections and sense of Inuit identity.

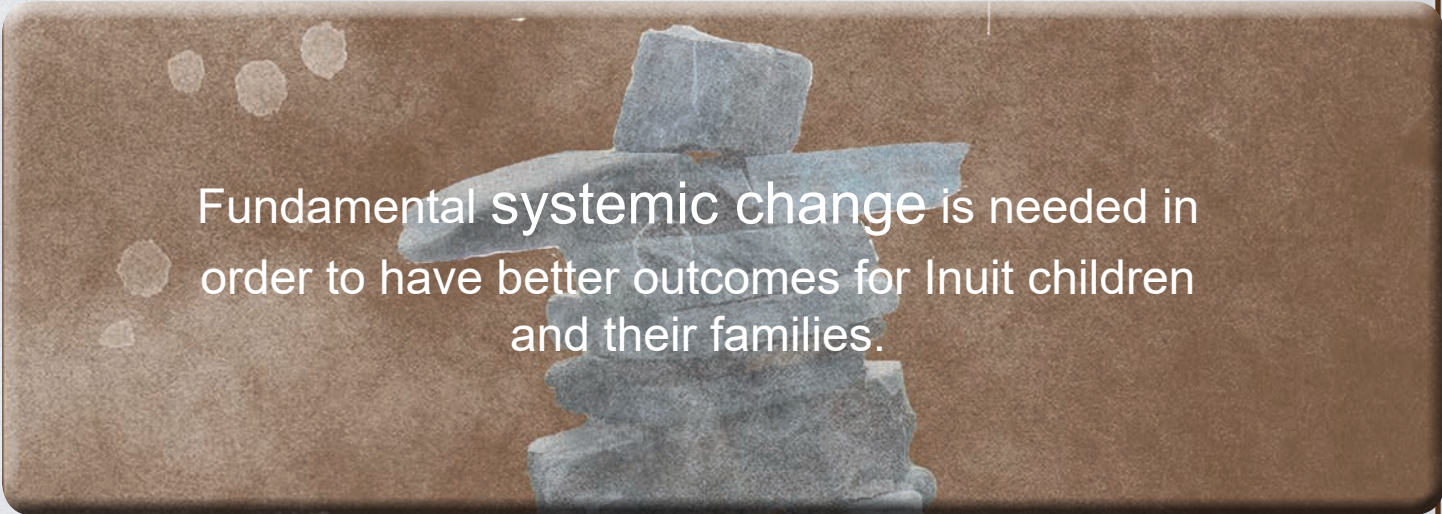
In our discussions, young people in care told us they miss home terribly, and fear losing their cultural connections and sense of Inuit identity. We repeatedly heard the significance of culture. This involves the importance of cultural continuity for the children, recognizes the value of traditional healing and treatment approaches, requires an understanding of Inuit ways of parenting, families and community, and speaks to cultural education being necessary for professionals.

The current reactive and crisis-oriented approach to protecting Inuit children is not working. It does not incorporate Inuit knowledge. Participants told us they expect prevention and earlier intervention to better serve Inuit children, their families and communities. This is supported in the literature. We heard that there is more capacity in their communities than is currently being used, and that more children should be able to stay in their homes with appropriate family support, or at least in their communities or territory. Culture and family need not be defined geographically. Family members living outside Nunatsiavut territory can provide loving care with a strong Inuit cultural commitment. We heard again and again that people perceive more resources going into sending children away from their communities than in keeping them close to home or with circles of people that know and care about them. There is an undeniable and pervasive sense of fear and mistrust of child protection authorities. Child protection is not seen as a resource, but rather as a source of fear. This is based on current experiences of the high numbers of Inuit children being removed, as well as adults' experiences as children with child welfare services.

It is important to acknowledge that there are many dedicated people who go to work in the child protection system every day, and others who work alongside them, to improve the lives of Inuit children and families. However their hard work is not providing the needed results for these young people. This problem is not about individual

performance. It involves problems with the system of child protection services.

Fundamental systemic change is needed in order to have better outcomes for Inuit children and their families. The good news is that many Inuit still believe that change is possible and that things can look and work differently if Inuit values, beliefs, and knowledge inform a new way of keeping children safe. There is an opportunity to make this shift now.



Fundamental systemic change is needed in order to have better outcomes for Inuit children and their families.

We carefully considered what we heard in the individual and community sessions, assessed the results of the file review, and reflected on what we learned in the literature review. When we combined this with our experiences advocating for vulnerable Indigenous children and youth over the years, we developed the following recommendations. We believe these recommendations will create both immediate and longer term change to benefit Inuit children, youth, and their families.

This report does not contain recommendations on Nunatsiavut Government establishing its own child protection system. With this authority already in place, this is a decision for Nunatsiavut to make on its own terms, timing, and readiness. However there is widespread support that services and solutions for Indigenous children must be led by Indigenous governments, organizations and people.

Recommendations

These recommendations identify immediate changes to benefit children's rights. Some also offer a path to longer term change, and if implemented, can also support and build capacity for a transition to Inuit directed child welfare services in the future.

1. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure Inuit values, knowledge, and cultural practices are integrated in all policies, planning and services for Inuit children and youth.
2. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development seek the input and perspectives of Inuit children and youth in all plans that affect them and in a manner that reflects their age and developmental level.
3. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development provide Inuit children and youth who are in care with information about their background, circumstances, and family in a manner that reflects their age and developmental level.
4. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure Inuit children and youth maintain relationships with important individuals in their lives, with special consideration for siblings whenever possible.
5. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador work with Indigenous governments and communities to establish and support activities and programs supporting Indigenous youth leadership opportunities and celebrating Indigenous youth role models.
6. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure traditional Inuit values and healing practices are integrated into services, program options, safety plans and intervention plans for children, youth and their families. Nunatsiavut Government must be invited and supported to actively participate.

- 7.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development complete an audit on all out-of-community placements, and engage Nunatsiavut Government to ensure all placement options have been considered first within the child's family and/or community, and secondly within Nunatsiavut territory.
- 8.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure all access visits are designed for the maximum benefit of the child, and that they take place in a child-friendly and culturally appropriate environment that promotes parent-child interaction.
- 9.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure appropriate transition planning for children who have been removed from their parents and community. This must include specific and structured steps when children are removed and returned. Nunatsiavut Government must be invited and supported to actively participate.
- 10.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development broaden its mandate and range of responses to focus more on prevention and early intervention for children and families in the child protection system, and support Inuit community services and programs that contribute to prevention and early intervention.
- 11.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development consistently develop cultural continuity plans for children and youth and ensure these plans are meaningful, authentic and are enhanced by Inuit community resources. Plans must include measurable steps ensuring the child or youth in care is provided with opportunities for Inuit cultural activities, ceremonies, celebrations, practices, lifestyle, family and community contacts.
- 12.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development consistently engage parents, family members and foster parents in meaningful collaboration for all planning related to their children and youth, and those in their care.
- 13.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development enhance recruitment and explore new models of foster care which could potentially include placing parents and children together.

14. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development develop and evaluate outcome goals for child protection services in partnership with Nunatsiavut Government.
15. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development review and revise the scope, mandate and physical environment of the alternate family care group home in Nain to ensure a quality and safe placement option for Inuit children and youth. Include consideration for a visitation centre, emergency placements, parent coaching centre, healing facility, and transition-to-home placement centre for children and parents.
16. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development establish a permanent Indigenous cultural component in the PRIDE training program for foster parents, and ensure the cultural components in the PRIDE training program are developed and delivered by Indigenous resource personnel.
17. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure timely and responsive delivery of PRIDE training program, at a minimum of once per year in Indigenous communities.
18. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development work to increase kinship care options and increase financial and social support for kinship caregivers.
19. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure professionals and caregivers working with traumatized children and families receive mandatory education in caring for traumatized children and youth.
20. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development review and update the current level of financial supports to Inuit children, families and caregivers in the child protection system to reflect the northern Labrador reality. This must include addressing prices of goods and services, as well as transportation and delivery costs.
21. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador vigorously adopt and observe Jordan's Principle for Indigenous children and youth, and work with the federal government to access available federal resources to help address needs.

22. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development provide enhanced authority to frontline staff to use professional discretion in day to day decision making, including financial decisions, on behalf of children and families.
23. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador develop and deliver mandatory Indigenous cultural education to public servants in a tiered approach with Level 1 being required for all public servants, and Level 2 reflecting more advanced content for those directly working with Indigenous communities or making decisions and policies related to Indigenous communities. Indigenous representatives should be engaged in content development and delivery.
24. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure training plans are in place for all social workers in Indigenous child protection settings and in addition to Recommendation 23, include community-based practical cultural learning experiences with community resources.
25. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure each office in each community is staffed and equipped to respond on a daily basis to inquiries, requests, and complaints.
26. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure that frontline social workers in Indigenous communities are supported with immediate access to quality clinical supervision and mentoring.
27. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development work with Nunatsiavut Government to recruit and educate Inuit staff to fill professional and paraprofessional roles with children, families, and communities.
28. Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development develop a recruitment and retention strategy for remote Indigenous communities which includes best practices in innovative approaches to recruitment, with consideration for incentives including continuing education, travel allowance, housing support, remuneration, and staff wellness, and workplace practices reflecting Inuit knowledge and values.

- 29.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development actively engage frontline staff in Indigenous communities to develop and inform the recruitment and retention strategy in Recommendation 28, and to also inform the department on policies and practices in Indigenous communities, as well as a plan for employee self-care and well-being.
- 30.** Government of Newfoundland and Labrador work with Nunatsiavut Government and other levels of government as necessary to address inadequate housing, food insecurity, and safe shelters for vulnerable Inuit children and their families.
- 31.** Department of Justice and Public Safety engage justice system service providers to explore ways to improve access and timeliness of advice, services and decisions for family law matters in Labrador and ensure appropriate supports to implement the plan. This is particularly urgent where communities are served by circuit courts.
- 32.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, at Nunatsiavut Government's request, actively support enhanced Inuit community capacity in order to prepare for transition to Inuit responsibility for child welfare services.
- 33.** Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development monitor and evaluate the state of Indigenous children and youth involved in protection-related services in Newfoundland and Labrador, and report this annually to the Legislature.



Makkovik

1. Introduction

a. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

Newfoundland and Labrador's Child and Youth Advocate is an independent Statutory Officer of the House of Assembly. The **Child and Youth Advocate Act** gives authority to provide advocacy services, and conduct reviews and investigations in representing the rights, interests, and viewpoints of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador. Section 15(1)(a) of the **Act** empowers the Advocate to review or investigate matters related to a child or group of children whether or not a complaint is made. Such reviews do not replace criminal investigations, and do not assign legal responsibilities. They are meant to identify and advocate for system improvements to enhance the overall safety and well-being and access for young people receiving designated services.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate works from a rights-based approach. The Office is guided by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** in advocating for the rights of young people. This is the most widely endorsed human rights treaty in the world. Canada ratified the Convention in 1991, with the written support of all provinces and territories. These children's rights are human rights that every child in Canada has without exception. Article 30 specifically identifies Indigenous children as requiring special consideration to protect their right to culture, language, and religion. Article 12 speaks to the importance of including young people's perspectives in matters affecting them. We take this right very seriously and have intentionally created multiple opportunities for young people's voices to be included in this Review process.

b. The Issue

Inuit children, their families and communities are struggling in the child protection system. The sad truth is that this is neither news, nor is it isolated to this province. The majority of Inuit children grow up in strong, loving and resilient families, and greatly benefit from solid cultural, family, kinship and community connections. However this is not all children's experience.

Inuit children's experiences are directly affected by their people's histories with

colonialist practices and laws. For many of these families, this history lives on. Many experienced major negative life events which were based in family histories of intergenerational trauma. This historical trauma has involved, for example, parents or grandparents who may have experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse. There were attempts to erase their culture, eliminate their language and shame them, instill a sense of inferiority about who they were and where they were from. Many were removed from their own families as children and were deprived of the love, care and teachings of their families.

“Historical, multigenerational and inter generational trauma refers to the collective emotional, spiritual, and psychological pain people endure as a result of traumatic events stemming from historic and current policies, such as surviving residential schools, or the violent loss of loved ones.”

(source: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report, 2019).

These negative experiences affect generations to come. We know and can expect that these experiences have impacts and they may include mental health and addictions issues, parenting challenges, family violence, and suicide for example. When trauma is not addressed we know that it can show itself in health and behavioural outcomes. The impacts of this history are still emerging and the understanding of it is still growing. When these impacts are combined with factors such as poverty, lack of resources and supportive services, housing and food insecurity, geographic isolation, and systems which are not based on Inuit ways of knowing and understanding family and community relationships, then Inuit children and youth lose out.

Because of these impacts, many Inuit come to the attention of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. It is responsible for child protection services in Newfoundland and Labrador. At the time of writing, the Department of Children,

Seniors and Social Development provides protection services for children under age 16, as well as voluntary residential and supportive services for youth age 16 to 18 under the mandate of the **Children and Youth Care and Protection Act**. Under this **Act**, child protection services are primarily referral based, non-voluntary, and reactive. This crisis-driven approach sees Inuit children removed from their families and communities in disproportionate numbers, and has contributed to strong feelings among Inuit of mistrust, fear and powerlessness related to the child protection system.

The new **Children, Youth and Families Act** proposes to provide opportunities for change with Indigenous children, families, communities and governments. Taking this opportunity to set a new course is an important first step. While there is no Indigenous organization mandated in Newfoundland and Labrador to deliver child protection/welfare services, the **Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act** gives sovereignty to Nunatsiavut Government over child welfare legislation and services.

As of September 30, 2017, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador reported 1,005 children in care; 345 were Indigenous, and 150 were Inuit (Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, 2018). Although only 7% of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador identify as Indigenous, 33% of the children-in-care were Indigenous (Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, 2017). These numbers are very troubling. They tell us that fundamental changes are necessary in the child protection system so that Indigenous children can have better supports and results. The status quo is not an option.

Fundamental changes are necessary in the child protection system so that Indigenous children can have better supports and results.

Inuit concerns about child welfare services and the number of their children and youth being removed from their families, kin, community, and territory are shared. Indigenous governments, organizations and communities have long identified their serious concerns and have demanded change.

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments have publicly identified concerns, with the federal government describing the situation of Indigenous child welfare as a crisis in Canada (Government of Canada, 2018). Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has officially apologized to Indigenous peoples in Canada for destructive government policies over the years and the undervaluing of Indigenous languages and traditional practices (Prime Minister of Canada, 2017), and has visited Labrador to apologize.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on governments to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action, 2015). The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates has identified serious concerns about the best interests and rights of Indigenous children and youth not being met in the current child welfare system in Canada (Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, 2018). This followed an emergency meeting where the federal Indigenous Services Minister stated that the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in care in Canada has reached crisis proportions (Tasker, 2018).

Professional groups and associations have weighed in, including the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW). CASW released a report in 2018 that identified the over-representation of Indigenous children, youth and families in child welfare systems as a top priority to be addressed. The report cited high rates of poverty, poor housing, isolation, barriers to education, food insecurity and lack of incorporation of Indigenous cultural values, traditions and practices as reasons for this over-representation (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2018). While there is agreement about the need for change, it has been slow to come and Inuit children are still waiting.

We are very concerned about the plight of Inuit children in the child protection system. We undertook this Independent Review to look at what is happening with Inuit children in the child protection system, and to identify changes that will directly benefit these

children now and in the future. We were honoured when the Nunatsiavut Government asked if we could independently investigate Inuit children's experiences. We have undertaken this work with respect and humility. There is no quick fix. Solutions will require true commitment, a new vision, and a renewed relationship with Inuit. This must happen regardless of any Nunatsiavut Government future decision to enact its authority to establish its own child protection laws and program. However there are opportunities to act immediately to improve Inuit children's lives and experiences, and those of their families and communities. This work must be undertaken without delay for both short term and long term change that will be in the best interests of these vulnerable children.

Solutions will require true commitment, a new vision, and a renewed relationship with Inuit.





Nain

2. The Process for this Independent Review

We greatly appreciated the knowledge, commitment, passion and determination that participants brought to these discussions with us. We would also like to acknowledge that many people brought tremendous pain, hurt, and frustration. We heard you, and we honour your strength.

**We heard you and
we honour your strength.**

This Independent Review consisted of three main parts:

- a.** Community sessions and interviews
- b.** Comprehensive file review
- c.** Literature review including research, other reviews, Commissions and Inquiries

In the early planning stages, we developed a terms of reference in consultation with Nunatsiavut Government for this work. Nunatsiavut was very supportive of this Independent Review and we helped offset costs for it to commit two of its Family Connections Program staff as liaisons. They assisted with promoting community meetings, helped us make connections, assisted with facilitating sessions, and helped us to understand some of the cultural issues as they arose.

Darlene Jacque, BSW, and Danielle Baikie, BSW, were valuable contributors to this project and they deserve many thanks for their hard work, and travel flexibility. Through Nunatsiavut Government, we also engaged Elder Coordinator Beverley Hunter to ensure Elders were aware of opportunities to participate. Beverley also accompanied us to visit with children in care outside of Labrador and provided a connection to their communities. She also organized cultural activities for the children. This was both meaningful and powerful for the children as well as for our staff. Additionally, we arranged with Nunatsiavut Government to have interpreters and mental health supports available as needed.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador departmental executives participated from the outset. Throughout the course of the Independent Review, we met or we spoke with government officials at various levels including frontline staff. This Review is about systemic issues and not individual performance. If questions arose about individual employee performance at any point, we ensured the department was aware of the concerns so that it could



Darlene Jacque,
BSW
Family
Connections
Program,
Nunatsiavut
Government



Danielle Baikie,
BSW
Family
Connections
Program,
Nunatsiavut
Government



Beverley Hunter,
Elder Coordinator,
Nunatsiavut
Government

address issues through the appropriate processes.

We invited community participation to ensure we would clearly understand the experiences and views of those most affected. We wanted to make sure this would not be an academic exercise. It had to be about real people and their lived experiences. We encouraged broad participation and we were very pleased with the level of interest. We were flexible in the various ways people could share their views and perspectives with us. We heard from people in Labrador, on the island, and in other parts of Canada.

Overall, we connected with approximately 575 people. The richness of these conversations has greatly informed our understanding. The connections we made, and the conversations we shared have left a very strong and lasting impression on us. And we hope that sharing these experiences and stories will leave an impact on those who read this report and will create a commitment to change.

The **connections** we made,
and the conversations we shared
have left a very **strong** and
lasting impression on us.

a. Community Sessions and Interviews

From the outset, we decided this needed to be a process where people who were directly involved in this issue would be able to have a voice. We held community sessions, and also offered individual interviews for interested people. We distributed invitations which were translated into Inuktitut, and shared through community networks and on local Inuit community radio stations.

We received strong interest, with some people contacting us from other parts of the country to participate. We met in Inuit communities, and also in communities where Inuit live. Most sessions occurred in Labrador while others occurred on the island. We talked to some people over the phone. We heard from young people, Elders, parents, extended family members, foster parents, service providers, community representatives, local leaders, those interested or experienced on this issue, as well as Nunatsiavut and provincial and federal government representatives. We held some sessions just for young people.

We wanted to create a safe space, and so we committed that people's names, organizations or connections to their home communities would not be identified in this report, and no one would be directly quoted. We intended to create opportunities for individuals to freely share their knowledge, and express their experiences, opinions, and reflections on ideas for change with child protection practices for Inuit children.

We made several trips to Labrador and visited Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Rigolet, Postville, Happy Valley Goose Bay, and Northwest River. First visits were usually introductory in nature, and subsequent visits involved more in-depth discussions. We also visited communities outside Labrador where Inuit children are living in care. The Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association was an important link in reaching out to many of these children and foster families and we want to recognize



Approximately
575 people
participated in
various ways.

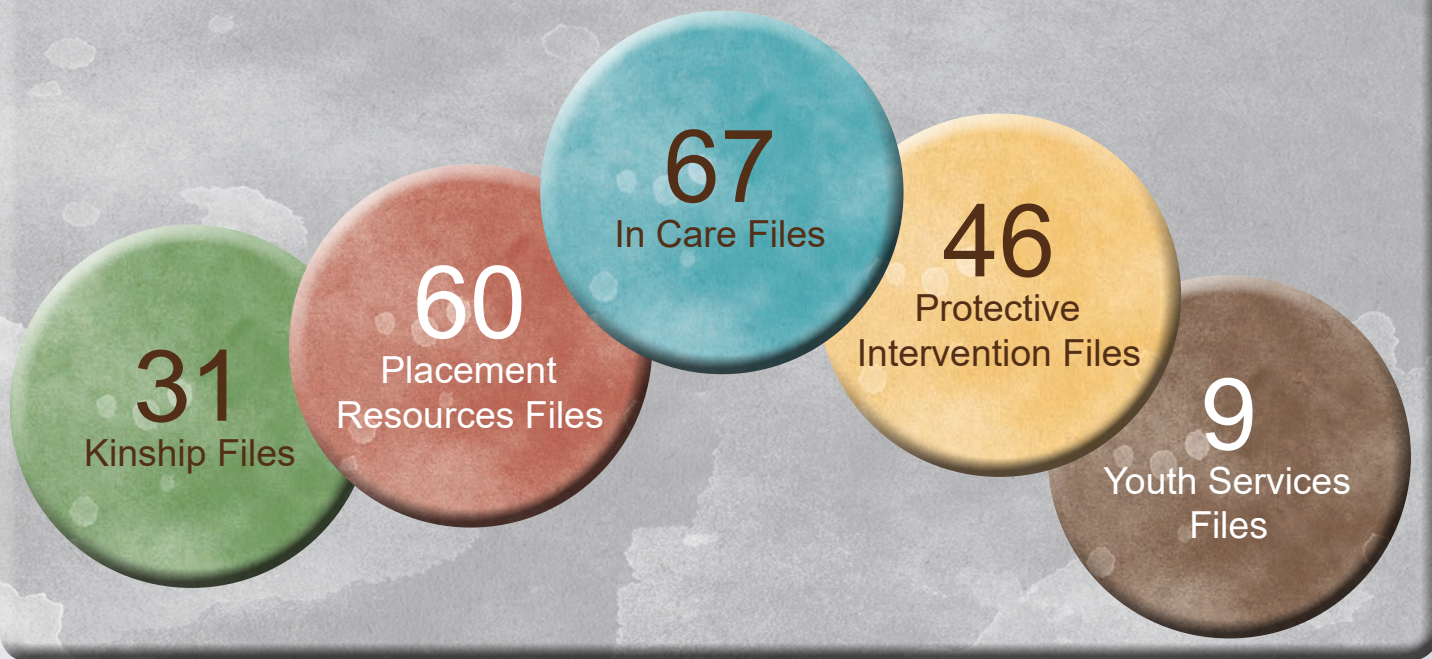
the value of their support and help. We arranged for a Nunatsiavut representative to build cultural activities into these sessions with children residing outside Labrador, and this was a link for the children to their home communities. During many of these community visits, we also offered individual advocacy services. These were very meaningful visits for us, and have greatly informed our understanding. Through this report, we intend to share what we have learned.



b. Comprehensive File Review

Another part of this work involved an extensive file review for Inuit children involved in protection related services through the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. We reviewed 213 files involving Inuit children and youth. We examined files that were open, and active with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development on December 31, 2017. We identified all cases for Inuit children involved with the following programs: In Care, Protective Intervention, Placement Resources/ Foster Homes, Youth Services, and Kinship. We then identified all of their home communities. We selected files from each program area and made sure cases from each community were included. We also identified files where children were placed outside Nunatsiavut territory. We requested the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development provide these files to us. The department did not select the files for this Independent Review. Some files were multi-generational.

Our file review included the following:



c. Research Involving Other Reviews, Inquiries, Findings

The third part of this Independent Review involved completing a literature review to look at relevant research, and other similar reviews, Inquiries, Commissions, reports and their findings and recommendations. This helped place this Independent Review in a broader context and also identified promising and best practices, as well as outstanding commitments and unfulfilled promises. The scope of this research extended provincially, nationally, and internationally.



Rigolet

3. Context and Background

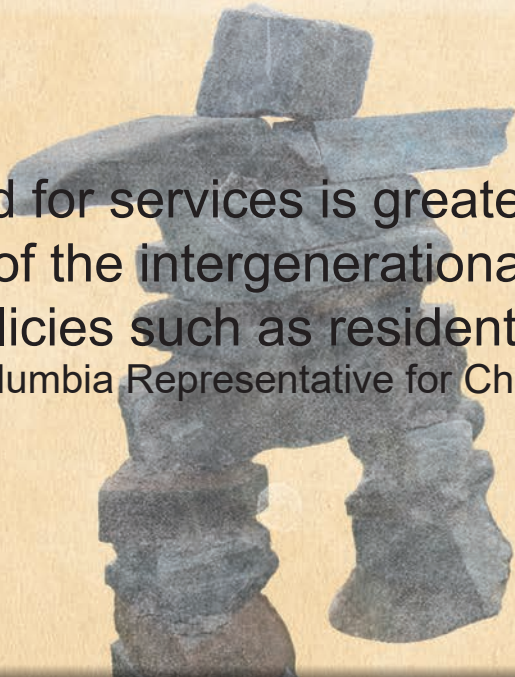
a. Historical Context

To understand current issues for Inuit, it is important to look at their history and to see the roots of the policies and events that shaped their lives. It is not practical to fully explore Inuit history in this province within this report. It would be impossible to provide a full discussion of colonization, settlement, and social and economic changes that Inuit have experienced. However, some context is important.

For thousands of years, Inuit have survived generation after generation in parts of this province and country that many would consider uninhabitable due to harsh weather and living conditions. They harvested resources of the ocean and the land in Labrador, a land well known for its challenges and hardships. Their pride, resilience, hard work, compassion, and nomadic life style, combined with exceptional hunting and survival skills, provided them with a rich and proud history. The challenges of survival on the land over thousands of years were managed in a way that was respectful of each other and the territory in which they lived. They sustained themselves with traditional systems of culture, law, family, and knowledge that ensured their survival (Nunatsiavut, 2019).

The arrival of Europeans on the coast of Labrador in the 1500's brought many changes and challenges to Inuit. Spirituality practices shifted. European diseases were introduced which had a devastating impact. Lifestyles began to gradually change to become more focused on settlements where communal and nomadic lifestyles were not encouraged. Traditional activities became tied to economic systems and trade, however Inuit were not equal players in these systems. After Confederation, the northern communities of Okak, Hebron and Nutak saw their services suspended by church, health and government authorities. The residents of these communities were abruptly resettled throughout the region that is now known as Nunatsiavut (Nunatsiavut, 2019). The loss of home, community, closeness to traditional hunting grounds, intimate knowledge of the natural environment which had been passed through the generations, and sense of place in the world were all losses associated with this resettlement. They continue to be felt today.

The impact of the resettlement was devastating and was further heightened with the opening of residential schools. The Moravian Mission and the International Grenfell Association, with the support of the provincial government, established schools with dormitory residences for Indigenous children. These remained open for decades. These residential schools form part of the collective history of Inuit today. Lockwood School in Cartwright closed in 1964; Makkovik Boarding School closed June 30, 1960; Nain Boarding School closed in 1973; Yale School in Northwest River closed in 1980; and St. Anthony Orphanage and Boarding School closed in 1979 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). We know the history of residential schools throughout Canada involved physical, emotional and sexual violence, and focused on plans for student assimilation, and elimination of Indigenous identity and culture. Former Inuit students from this province have voiced these experiences as well.



“...the need for services is greater and more complex because of the intergenerational effects of colonial policies such as residential schools.”
(British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth, 2017)

b. Socioeconomic Context

Inuit are at the lowest end of all well-being indicators in Canada according to Canada's first poverty reduction strategy (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018). The report identifies poverty as a condition of colonization and is a consequence of a shift from self-reliance to dependence on the cash economy and other assistance from the outside. In addition to reliance on government support payments, food insecurity, and poor housing, other indicators of poverty include poor education and health outcomes. The report goes further and speaks of cultural poverty as another feature of poverty where there is an erosion of language, culture, and traditions.

The national Inuit organization, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, presented a profile of Inuit in comparison to the rest of Canada (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018). It connects this to the trauma of resettlement. This profile shows an incredible discrepancy in socioeconomic conditions.

- ◆ 52% live in crowded homes compared to 9% of Canadians;
- ◆ 34% of 25 – 64 year olds have a high school diploma compared to 86% of Canadians in the same age range;
- ◆ 70% are food insecure compared to 8% of Canadian households;
- ◆ \$23,485 is the median income before tax for Inuit, compared to \$92,011 median income before tax of non-Indigenous people who live in Inuit Nunangat;
- ◆ 72.4 years is the projected life expectancy for Inuit in Canada, compared to 82.9 years projected life expectancy for non-Indigenous people in Canada;
- ◆ 12.3 per 1,000 in the infant mortality rate for Inuit infants, compared to 4.4 per 1,000 for non-Indigenous infants; and,
- ◆ 29% growth rate for the Inuit population in Canada, compared to 11% growth rate of the total population in Canada.



52%
of Inuit live
in crowded
homes



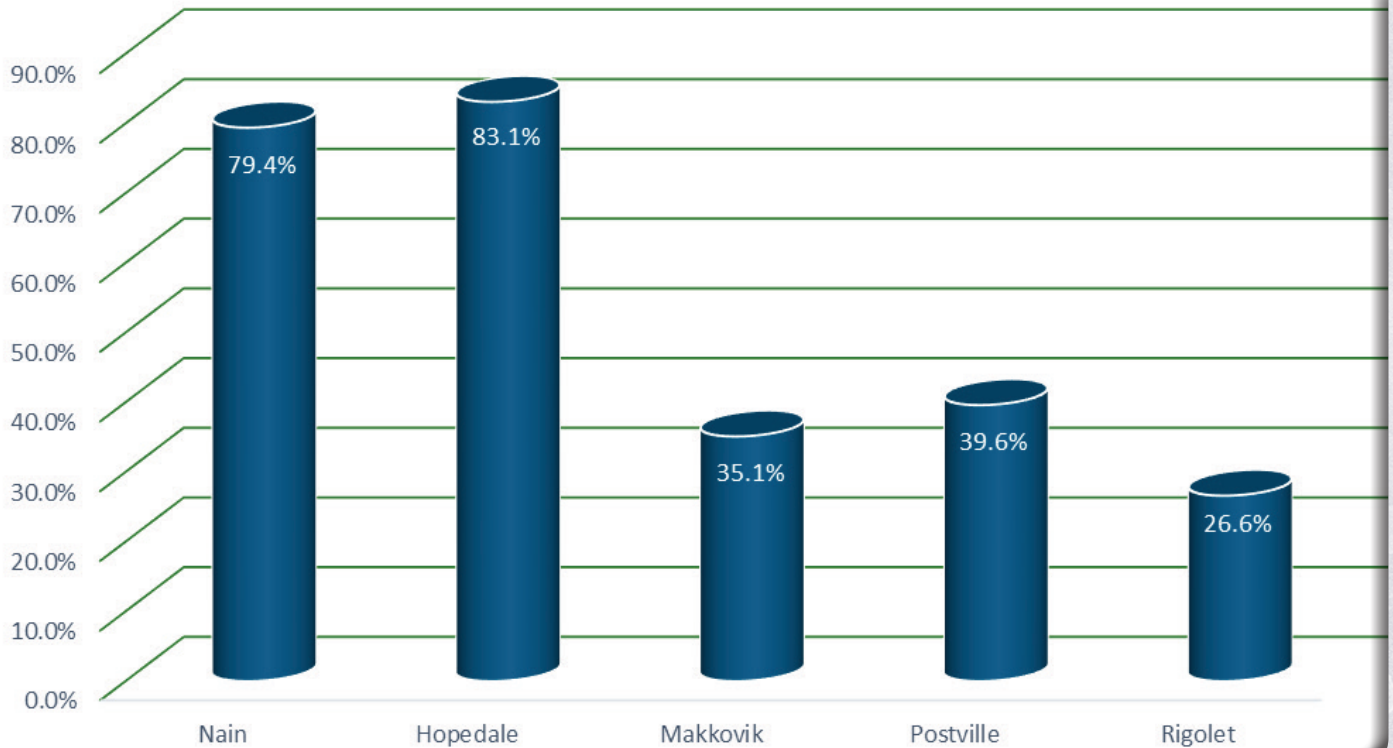
70%
of Inuit are food
insecure



29%
Growth
Rate in Inuit
populations

When raising children, an essential part of family life and parental responsibilities is being able to feed children appropriately. This is very challenging in Labrador's north coast communities because basic costs of living are extremely high. Nunatsiavut released information in 2017 from its food security survey in its communities (Nunatsiavut Government, 2017). The results provided clear evidence and sounded alarm bells.

Prevalence of food insecurity was reported as follows:



Food insecure households in Inuit communities were four times the level reported for the province in 2012 (Nunatsiavut Government, 2018). When a family cannot afford to adequately feed children, this is a poverty issue and not a parenting issue. However the history of removing children in Inuit/Indigenous communities includes government efforts to rescue and remove children from poverty, and inadequate housing. The following table provides a sample of actual prices from a grocery store bill in a northern Labrador community in 2019.

Sample Prices from the North Coast of Labrador 2019

Item	Cost \$
Apples (Bag of 12)	6.99
2 Litres of Fresh Milk	6.50
450g of Cheese	9.99
Beef Roast (per kg)	22.99
Chicken Nuggets (800g)	16.99
1.65 Litres Orange Juice	14.99
Kraft Dinner (per box)	3.69
Diapers (128) Size 5	57.99
Baby Wipes (per pack)	11.29
4.43 Litres Laundry Detergent	46.79
Toothpaste (130ml)	7.59
Body Wash (353ml)	12.49
Toilet Paper (6 rolls)	8.25

c. Human Rights Context

The impacts of both residential schools and the Sixties Scoop are still raw for many Inuit families and communities. Gerald Asivak, Minister of Nunatsiavut Government's Department of Health and Social Development stated in a December 12, 2018 news release "the way children are removed from homes and sent to live elsewhere is reminiscent of the Sixties Scoop, where children were taken from Indigenous families and put up for adoption" (Careen, 2018). The impacts are destructive to Inuit families, communities, education, child rearing practices, language, traditions, spirituality, and economic opportunities.

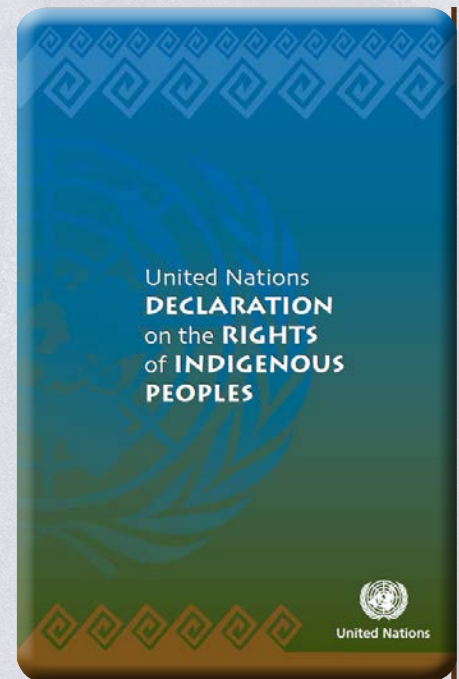
Contemporary child welfare laws, policies and practices see removal of children as the last plan of intervention and to be avoided where possible. Policies suggest that if removal is necessary for a child's safety, then every effort must be made to identify alternative care with immediate or extended family and kin as well as significant others in the community. Despite this, the number of children being removed is still high. The current treatment of Indigenous children is a violation of their rights and contradicts several human rights and other related frameworks.

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (United Nations, 1989) was ratified by Canada in 1991 and is the most broadly endorsed human rights treaty in the world. It specifically protects children's rights because of children's unique vulnerabilities. This Convention addresses many issues facing Indigenous children including the right to be heard, the right to safety from neglect, mistreatment, abuse and exploitation, rights to health, identity, education, culture, and it specifically identifies Indigenous and minority children as having a right to special consideration and protections for their culture, language and religious practices.

The Convention is built on the following four principles and has a host of rights or articles associated with these principles:

- a. Non-discrimination
- b. Best interests of the child
- c. Life, survival and development
- d. Participation of young people and inclusion of their perspectives

The United Nations adopted the **Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** in 2007. It speaks to the rights of Indigenous peoples to be free of discrimination and addresses their rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health, education, self-determination, and other rights (United Nations, 2007). There is particular recognition that Indigenous families and communities retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education, and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights and culture of the child. It speaks of the right to live as distinctive peoples without fear of children being forcibly removed to another group. The Declaration addresses children’s right to an education in their own culture and language when living outside their communities. Furthermore, Indigenous women and children must be able to benefit from protections for all forms of violence and discrimination.



The **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** provides all children with the right to equal benefit and protection of the law, without discrimination (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982). The Charter reflects rights identified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child such as protection from discrimination. “Others are not express, but fall within the Charter provisions such as consideration of the child’s views and wishes in the Convention’s Article 12, which has been found to be part of due process within the principles of fundamental justice under section 7 of the Charter” (Canadian Bar Association, 2019).

The **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** principles identify the importance of upholding Indigenous rights to justice, acceptable social, health and economic outcomes, self-governance, and cultural revitalization (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a). It identifies child welfare in the first five of its 94 calls to action. The calls to action identify the importance of reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples, and the need to renew relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. These first five calls to action specifically address child welfare systems’ relationships with Aboriginal peoples, and stress the importance of reducing the high number of

Aboriginal children in care, while understanding their culture, and acknowledging the history and impact of past trauma.

Federal and provincial human rights laws provide protection against discrimination. The **Canadian Human Rights Tribunal** ruled in 2016 that the federal government had violated the human rights of 163,000 Aboriginal children and ordered the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to take immediate action on this inequality (Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations Child Welfare, 2016). Since the initial ruling in 2016 there have been seven non-compliance orders issued to the Government of Canada (Barrera, 2019).

Jordan's Principle is a child first principle, and in 2007 it was unanimously passed in the House of Commons. It ensured that First Nations children living on and off reserve had equitable access to all government funded services. Its purpose was to eliminate the jurisdictional disputes between levels of government regarding financial responsibility for services and supports (First Nations Caring Society, 2018). The **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** made **Jordan's Principle** its third in 94 Calls to Action and demanded that the principle be fully implemented and take measures to immediately implement the **Principle's** full meaning and scope (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a). The Government of Canada formally extended its responsibility in September 2018 to include Inuit children to access essential government funded health, social and educational services and supports when they need them through the Child First Initiative.

d. Legislative Context

Changes in federal and provincial law and existing provisions in the **Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act** (2005) offer potential opportunities for change in Indigenous child welfare.

As this report is being prepared, the federal government has tabled legislation which would provide authority to Indigenous governments throughout the country to assume responsibility for their own child welfare services. It has also tabled legislation to protect and support Indigenous languages. The proposed child welfare legislation would

give jurisdiction to Indigenous peoples to care for their own children in a culturally appropriate way (Tasker, 2019). Significant questions have been raised about the funding structure and resource commitments which many see as vital in order for the legislation to be meaningful.

Provincially, the new **Children, Youth and Families Act** is meant to strengthen service delivery to Indigenous children, youth and families, and have an enhanced focus on maintaining children in their homes (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, 2018b). The legislation includes provisions to improve services by recognizing the uniqueness of Indigenous cultures, enabling delegation of services under the Act to Indigenous governments, improving cultural connections planning for children, and requiring specific placement considerations for Indigenous children.

The **Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act** (2005) formalized the creation of Nunatsiavut Government and gives sovereignty over child welfare matters to Nunatsiavut Government (Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act, 2005). Although Chapter 17 of the **Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act** (2005) enables Nunatsiavut Government to make laws regarding children in need of protection in Labrador Inuit lands and Inuit communities, Nunatsiavut Government has yet to develop its own child protection legislation and program.





Hopedale

4. What We Heard and Observed

We heard and observed a lot throughout this process. We heard stories of pain and hurt. While some stories were recent, other experiences were older but had clearly made a mark on people's spirit. We heard frustration, fear and mistrust. But despite all of that, we heard the voices of courageous and proud people who are committed to Inuit children and communities. We listened as people told us this process gave them hope that things would change, and that government would hear them. We respect their experience, and we honour their strength.

We heard frustration, fear and mistrust. But despite all of that, we heard the voices of **courageous and proud** people who are committed to Inuit children and communities.

a. Young People's Perspectives

When we reached out to speak and meet with people for this Independent Review, we were particularly interested in the experiences, views and perspectives of young people. Some lived in their home communities, while others lived far from home in non-Inuit families and communities. Some had involvement with the child protection system, and some did not. But even if they did not have direct experience, they understood it through the experiences of family, extended family members, classmates, and friends. At the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, we want to make sure their views have been heard and represented, first and foremost. This is their story.

The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls spoke of "families of the heart". This was similar to the discussions we had about broader notions of family in Inuit communities. The report talked about family extending beyond biological and nuclear family ties, and including those who have chosen to stay closely involved out of feeling of love and respect (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report, 2019). Mainstream

society does not define family in this way, and we believe this understanding is fundamental to more effectively engaging with Inuit and communities.

Young people told us they miss home, they miss their families, and they miss their friends. Some of them told us they had been away for years. We heard of young people making requests to go back home for family funerals but being turned down because there was nowhere to stay. They told us that they always consider their community home, and that it keeps calling them back. Children told us that sometimes their friends were suddenly not in school, and they did not know what happened to them or when they would see them again. Teachers told us children did not generally talk about missing classmates and friends, and that there seemed to be a sad acceptance of them being gone. Young people told us they miss traditional foods such as pitsik, and they miss the fun of traditional Inuit games and dances. We were delighted when they showed us the monkey dance, the seal crawl, and the back to back game. Some children proudly recited numbers in Inuktitut, and listened intently to stories in Inuktitut. But others said they had forgotten their language and saw no sense in working on it because they would only forget it again because they never hear it or use it. Some children had difficulty pronouncing their last names or did not know the names of their brothers and sisters.

Inuit children and youth miss their traditional lifestyle. We heard of dreams of going home one day and hunting a polar bear. They

Inuit children and youth miss their traditional lifestyle.



We want to make sure young people's views have been heard and represented, first and foremost. This is their story.

told us they miss going out on the land where they learn traditional skills. For them, this experience is about connecting to their families and Elders, and to nature. It is about learning and transferring knowledge that is very unique. It is not just about a “camping trip” in the wilderness. Experiences in nature have a different cultural meaning for Inuit children and youth and their families.

We heard that they feel they lose their cultural connections in many ways once they are removed from their Inuit culture. One young person told us of attempting to stay connected through social media, but never feeling truly connected and was unlikely to return home because of being away for so many years. And many told us they feel this loss of cultural connection is part of losing their identity. We believe this loss is truly profound.

Overall, young people indicated that they were well-cared for in their foster homes. Some told us they feel like part of the family, although this was not everyone’s experience. Some told us they appreciate stable housing and food. They like that there are new opportunities for activities (at school or elsewhere), travel, and benefits that they did not have at home.



b. Role of Culture

Young and old alike spoke of the value of their culture. This was discussed in several ways:

- i. The importance and need for cultural continuity in all plans for children
- ii. The significance of traditional cultural approaches in healing and treatment programs
- iii. The need to understand Inuit ways of parenting, families, and community
- iv. The requirement for cultural education for professionals working with Inuit children, working in Inuit communities, or making decisions and policy for Inuit children

i. The Importance of Cultural Continuity

Young people told us their identity is strongly linked to being Inuit. It is who they are and where they come from. When children are removed from their culture, a clear ongoing plan for cultural connection is essential in order to preserve this sense of identity. When supported and nurtured, this identity is a source of strength, pride and hope. Our file review showed that this does not seem to be truly appreciated. Simply being in nature is not a cultural continuity plan, nor is watching videos or the APTN channel on television.

We heard that cultural continuity planning is weak when children are removed from their Inuit culture. Young people told us directly that they become disconnected from their language and traditions. They no longer eat traditional Inuit food. When we spent time with a group of Inuit children who had been placed outside their families and culture, they had great fun and proudly showed us various Inuit games and dances. But they said they did not often celebrate and practice their culture like this. Some said they could not recall any activities or events that they would consider cultural.

Foster parents were very supportive of children's connections to their culture. Some said they had very little preparation about culture before the children were placed with

them. Others said they would be very pleased to see the children return home for visits because this would enable community contacts, rather than family usually coming to visit the children. Some said they would be quite prepared to accompany the children home for visits more frequently if their assistance was needed.

ii. Traditional Cultural Approaches in Healing and Treatment Programs

When children are struggling, they and the adults in their families need help and support. Such approaches have been described to us as “fluid”, and may involve seeking the wisdom of Elders, taking part in traditional land-based programs, and may build in elements of spirituality. It may involve obtaining guidance from those who have lived experiences, or have found a path to healing. It can reinforce Inuit identity, pride, skill, competence and strength. For Inuit, cultural safety and identity are important for healing and health.

Participants told us they feel like the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development does not support or validate traditional Inuit cultural approaches to healing and treatment. We heard that when counselling is required, Inuit receive the message that mainstream counselling and therapy is the acceptable standard. Individual preferences for counselling interventions are often overruled if the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development is not in agreement.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) indicated one of the ways to reduce the number of children in care would be by:

“Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.”

(Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #1)

iii. Understanding Inuit ways of Parenting, Families, and Community

Family and community representatives expressed frustration and anger because they felt Inuit world views on parenting, family, and community are not supported in dominant government policies and programs. In Inuit culture, extended family has greater importance and significance in the day to day life of a child. For example, grandparents and aunts may share daily care routines with parents for a child. Community members, while perhaps not related by blood, are seen as extensions of family. The strengths in culture, traditions, ceremonies, and communities are not fully explored or a part of planned interventions. People told us that decisions are being made on behalf of children that are insensitive to culture, particularly around kinship and significant other care resources.

“The phrase “families of the heart” is an inclusive term that extends beyond the nuclear or even extended family to include people chosen as family members. These are people who are not biologically related but have chosen to stay closely involved and support each other out of mutual love and respect”.
(National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Interim Report, 2017)

When Nunatsiavut Government does not have significant input into child welfare policies and procedures, there is a missed opportunity to build more cultural relevance in practices that are aligned in the Inuit way. People talked of a need to have a review process which will include family, Elders, and community input to ensure there is accountability for decisions and that all options have been explored before a child is removed. Families are interested in being brought together to ensure their knowledge

and experience are considered, in conjunction with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. People expressed hurt and frustration that the Inuit way is still considered inferior to mainstream and is not being recognized for its strengths and capacities. They said they need opportunities, with the support of Nunatsiavut Government and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, to demonstrate leadership and capacity to care and protect their children based on Inuit ways. They told us Inuit ways need to be shown trust and respect.

iv. Cultural Education for Professionals in Inuit Communities

In order for services to be more culturally responsive, the service providers and decision makers must become culturally humble. When representatives of the mainstream culture enter an Indigenous community to provide services, it is important to ensure there is an appreciation and respect for the culture, knowledge, way of life, traditional ceremonies, the history of the people, the experiences of colonization, and Inuit connection to the land. There must also be an understanding of unintended biases. And in the case of child protection services, there must be an openness to various ways and definitions of families and parenting. While we learned of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development offering in-service cultural training, we heard from community participants as well as current and former Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development staff that it has not been sufficient.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has made inroads in cultural education regarding immigrants and refugees coming to the province. However, it lacks an overall comprehensive standardized approach to cultural education for those working with Indigenous people and communities.

We know the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development is not the only service provider, nor the only government department making decisions and developing policies which impact Inuit communities. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has made inroads in cultural education regarding immigrants and refugees coming to the province. However, it lacks an overall comprehensive standardized approach to cultural education for those working with Indigenous people and communities.

c. Prevention and Early Intervention

The current child protection system deals primarily with crisis, and intervenes to prevent further maltreatment. It is reactive and non-voluntary. We heard that people do not see social workers in their communities as resources where they can reach out early for assistance when they have problems and need supports. We found participants to be very honest and forthright about the need for action when children need help and assistance, including when their own families cannot care for them and provide a safe home. However there was considerable frustration that opportunities for prevention and early intervention are not within the normal range of services.

People are interested in additional interventions that are voluntary, preventative and involve community supports reflecting Inuit culture and knowledge. They said they feel that considerable more effort and resources go into removing children than supporting them in their families or communities. They said the current system is very reactive and crisis driven, and this is where the resources are focused. They told us that dealing with child protection issues should also be about dealing with much deeper rooted issues which are based on histories of oppression and inequality. Resources and culturally respectful ways of dealing with these root causes are extremely important.

Participants talked about many ways of treating and preventing family problems. Treating the family holistically is important so that children can thrive in healthy families and within strong communities. Services must work together and must recognize the place of a child in their family and community, and the importance of culture that surrounds them and gives them identity and strength. Many people can contribute to the child's well-being and growth, and these relationships in children's lives are vital and

must be nurtured and supported. Culture and language must be seen as central when plans are made to help a child.

Broader community issues of poverty, housing, treatment services for mental health and addictions, and food insecurity must be addressed early to create an environment where children can have better outcomes. People talked about the value of Aboriginal Family Resource Centres, Friendship Centres, and family support programs which can offer early childhood programs, support teen parents, offer direct family supports, parenting programs, and safe shelter options. We heard very positive feedback on Nunatsiavut's Family Connections Program but there was concern because it does not have permanent federal funding. People said these types of proactive services would support children and their families, and help children stay in their homes, with family, or in their home communities. People talked about the value of community outreach and wellness programs to wrap around children and families to offer prevention and early intervention supports. More help is needed through increased treatment services for substance abuse and help for families dealing with violence. Overall people said they would like to see more effort and focus for positive community programs for young people and their families. People felt very strongly that waiting for a crisis to unfold in the life of a child is unacceptable.

Finally, it is important to understand that today's Inuit children and youth will be tomorrow's leaders. In addition to delivering sound culturally driven child protection practice, it is important to provide experiences and opportunities to support and nurture leadership among Inuit youth. Shining a light on them, supporting their growth, and inspiring confidence are clear prevention strategies. They have a unique perspective to share with the world. They need opportunities to learn to be healthy and where they can show their strength and pride as Inuit. This can happen within and outside their communities. It may involve activities such as sports and recreation, cultural activities and camps, youth leadership events, volunteering, travel opportunities, and spending time learning from Elders and sharing these teachings.

People felt very strongly that waiting for a crisis to unfold in the life of a child is unacceptable.

d. Children in Care

When we began this Independent Review, nearly half of the Indigenous children in care in Newfoundland and Labrador were Inuit. Many had been removed not only from their family and kin, but also from their community and culture. We received a very strong message that the number of Inuit children being removed from their families, communities and culture is unacceptable and that this is a grave concern. We share this concern. We heard many examples of parents acknowledging responsibility for the reasons their children were placed in care, and in their desire to become healthy and have their family reunited. They talked honestly about their struggles with addictions, and violence at home. They did not argue that the children were removed for their well-being and safety. Their issue was that there seems to be so few options within the community or family to place the children. People talked about the difficulty with maintaining meaningful contact when their children are far away. Relationships are weakened. One young person told us of not knowing who their extended family was, nor how to reach them. In Inuit culture, this is a significant concern.

Participants told us that travelling from the north coast often means delays and cancellations in travel plans. It is disappointing for children and they feel hurt when visits are cancelled, regardless if it is because of weather, illness, or lack of parent/family availability. Parents and grandparents also feel frustrated and upset about cancelled or delayed visits. Social workers told us about their frustrations when visits are cancelled and they see the impact on the children. We learned that time between visits can be lengthy.

Some visits occur in new buildings with outdoor playground space, such as in Roddickton. However we also heard of parents' discomfort with some of the supervised access practices (both inside and out of their home communities). They said visits can occur in small government offices where children can become bored and act out, or ask to go back to their foster home. This is devastating to parents. With visits being directly supervised, parents talked about the stress with trying to keep their child engaged in such an unnatural setting, and being fearful about how the child's or parent's behaviour may be interpreted.

It seems that more families travel to visit the children than children travel back home. Even if children cannot return to their family home, there is strong value in returning to their community. We also heard that some children are not comfortable and may be fearful on small planes. This becomes a barrier for visits when children are placed far away from home.

Many children told us they have been removed from home for extended periods of time and have had multiple placements over several years. Some expressed anger about being removed from their parents and community without having their questions answered. They asked to go home but were denied and were not provided with an explanation. There is pervasive insecurity associated with this. Some told us they never really feel connected to the community where they are placed, and no longer feel connected to their home community. Professionals and community members described the children's situation as being without an anchor or firm footing in the home community to re-establish themselves.

Some children had difficulty pronouncing their last names, or did not know the names of their brothers and sisters.

We learned about the lack of planning some children and their families experience when it is time to go back home, or at least back to their community. This should be a time of joy and anticipation. However it is often a time when young people are afraid, feel powerless, are stressed about returning, and can feel lost: Will they be reunited with their brothers and sisters? How will they fit back into school? Are their teachers expecting them? Will their friends accept them back? How will they deal with being angry with their parents for letting this happen? Will they be safe? Will they be blamed? Will they be removed again? Their uncertainty and insecurity is very real. The planning is not sufficient.

It is vitally important that any transition process ensure age appropriate participation of children and youth. Transitioning can be greatly improved with more proactive and inclusive planning. The process can be further improved with ongoing connections to family, community, and cultural resources and supports while in care.

e. Untapped Community Capacity

We heard that there are resources in communities that are not used and that could prevent some children being removed from their communities. When we completed our meetings, we heard that the training program for foster parents has not been offered in some Inuit communities on the north coast for years, despite people expressing interest in becoming foster parents, and despite children being sent to the island for foster home placements during this time. One young person told of being in foster care for 10 years and never being placed with an Inuit family. People said the recruitment process needs to be more timely, user friendly, and reflect Inuit values. We heard that other resources are available in communities that could be used to support children and their families, but are not sufficiently considered. This is seen as lack of understanding and/or respect for Inuit services and programs.

Inuit communities have to be more involved in decisions that affect their children. We heard clearly that communities have strengths and capacities that are not being explored or utilized, and that these strengths and capacities can help prevent children being removed from their communities. The Family Connections Program plays a key role in supporting parents and families at the community level. It is important to review how this role and other similar programs can be increased. It is equally important, in the interest of acknowledging the importance of Inuit strengths, knowledge, capacities, culture and community, to embrace approaches which build strength and community responses. Examples of some of these may include family resource centres, youth centres and programs, family violence shelters, language nests, and other cultural supports. It will be important to tap into community resources and involve community members, especially those involved with children's services and supports.

f. Foster Parents

Caring for children and youth is a major commitment. Foster parents are twenty-four hour care providers and develop special relationships with children and youth. Foster parents have an important role to play in working with biological families, being involved in case conferences, being a part of transition planning, and participating in decision-making. They must be a critical partner in the child protection intervention plan. These relationships are a real strength requiring support, nurturing, and respect. As an essential child welfare service, foster care can be much more than substitute care. It has the potential to be expanded to include supplementary services such as parent coaching, family support, life skills teaching, fostering a parent and child, and providing special needs care.

We heard foster parents express frustration with not being informed or prepared for a child's placement with them. They frequently reported being excluded from decisions affecting children in their care. They believe that everyday decisions for a child, such as school activities, sports involvement, and childcare need not be subject to bureaucratic approvals from the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development at various levels.

Some foster parents, particularly in Inuit communities, expressed considerable frustration about delays in financial payments. They told us that timely payments are very important because of the extremely high cost of living. In fact, this payment delay is a reason why some people cannot provide foster care for children, especially for sibling groups. They literally cannot afford to house and feed additional children in their families for periods of time without prompt financial support.

Some foster parents expressed concern and frustration about extended periods of time without social work support or visits when children are in their care. We heard examples when foster parents could not reach the social worker, or had to go through the RCMP to make contact. Access to social work support is important when families take on a commitment to provide care for a child or children.

We consistently heard about the critical need for additional foster homes within Inuit communities so that children could be placed within their culture and remain closer to home when family is not an option. The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development told us this, Nunatsiavut Government saw this as a priority, community governments voiced their concern, community representatives said additional homes were desperately needed, and family members felt very strongly about it. Therefore, it is very hard to understand why the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development has not offered the PRIDE (Parents Resource for Information, Development and Education) foster parent training program in some Inuit communities for years. This, despite there being expressions of interest and waiting lists of people interested in being foster parents, and large numbers of Inuit children being removed from Inuit communities and placed on the island. The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development provided the following information in February 2019 about the PRIDE training schedule:

PRIDE Training Schedule

Community	Last Date Offered	# Awaiting PRIDE	Comments
Hopedale	January 2018	2	Waiting since Fall 2018
Makkovik	May 2017	0	15 completed in Spring 2017
Nain	April 2016	5	Wait times have not been tracked but are estimated at approximately 6-8 months.*
Rigolet	March 2017	1	Waiting since February 2018
Postville	November 2018	0	Recruitment session planned for February 2019
*We visited Nain in February 2017 and learned of a wait list of approximately six potential foster homes at that time.			

In its response, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development indicated staffing shortages had prevented PRIDE from being offered. However it noted that recruitment was a priority and a train the trainer session was planned for late Winter 2019. Additionally, a PRIDE session for the Inuit zone was planned for Spring 2019.

g. Working Together

There was wide agreement throughout our discussions that child protection requires people to work together. This includes government services, community resources, and families. Healthy working relationships are vital. It is important that collaboration is not confused with cooperation. Collaboration has to be authentic, which means that people work together for a shared purpose. It must be respectful and address power imbalances with Inuit communities.

People told us they had positive and negative views of their experiences working together on children's issues and services. They acknowledged the importance of working together between the various service providers such as the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, Nunatsiavut Government, and others such as the RCMP, schools, health services, women's shelters, legal services and various community services. All agreed that the complexities of child protection mean that no one agency or authority can work in isolation and expect positive results.

While the justice system was not a focus for this Review, participants discussed frustrations about getting timely legal advice and decisions, and accessible family law services. There are clear challenges to accessibility when the majority of services and personnel are connected to circuit court visits in northern fly-in communities. However justice services are an important connection to child protections services and play an important role in children's lives.

Participants told us they liked that agreements existed and provided possible opportunities for working relationships, information sharing, consultations, decision making, and service delivery between Nunatsiavut Government and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. However, some were concerned that this does not always happen, or in the way they thought was intended. They believe

the spirit of the agreements does not seem to be fully realized. Many said they believed such agreements would mean equal partnerships between their government and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. However, some conversations indicated the working relationships and implementation of formal agreements are primarily driven by the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development authority and policies.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Nunatsiavut Government and the then Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) was referenced in the 2015 Report to Canada's Premiers on Aboriginal Children in Care (Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group, 2015). The agreement provided for the creation of "Planning Circles" whereby senior officials from CYFS would meet with senior officials from Nunatsiavut Government to discuss how to improve planning and enhance service delivery and coordination. We did not hear this approach discussed in community sessions, and this surprised us.

h. Human Resources

Human resources was also discussed broadly, and was not solely about provincial government positions. This section on human resources reflects information from a variety of sources. We assessed file information, we heard from current and previous staff of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, we asked specific staffing questions to the department, and we heard the perspectives of young people, community participants, and other professionals.

Human Resources data showed that over a four year period from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2018, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development had 12 social work positions in the Happy Valley-Goose Bay office, and four additional positions that were present during part of the period. The vacancy rate for social workers in Goose Bay was 21%. By comparison, there were 10 social work positions in Nunatsiavut communities that existed for all four years (2015-2018). The vacancy rate for these social work positions was 27%.

In Nunatsiavut communities, there were six community service worker positions during

this period. They had a vacancy rate of 31%. There is no comparable data for Happy Valley-Goose Bay because community service worker positions do not exist in the community.

In Nunatsiavut communities, there was one clinical program supervisor position, which was actively staffed 85% of the time during the period. In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, there were three clinical program supervisor positions that were actively staffed between 80% and 100% of the time, and one position that existed for part of the period (34 months), but which was vacant 85% of the time.

People acknowledged ongoing difficulty in recruiting and retaining child protection staff and those needed to support a child's well being (social workers, community service workers, mental health and addictions workers) to work in isolated, northern and remote communities. Many emphasized the need for more staff to do this difficult, complicated, and important work of keeping children safe. This will be especially true if there is more prevention and early intervention efforts in the future.

Participants also expressed concerns with recruiting and retaining support for foster homes, short term emergency accommodations, respite care, and other family support services. They made it clear that to truly make things better for Inuit children, youth, families and communities, additional funding and on-the-ground support is required.

Participants want more people from their Inuit communities to be educated and prepared to work in child protection. The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program between Nunatsiavut Government and Memorial University's School of Social Work was seen as a step in the right direction. However many of these graduates have chosen not to work in the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development positions. If this, or another such program is repeated in the future, changes to the current child protection system will be required in order for Inuit social workers to feel they can work in a program where their values and culture are reflected and respected. Participants told us that a barrier to working with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development is that the system is not trusted. Policies are seen to be rigid, parents are policed, and there is little professional discretion. Work is crisis oriented instead of helping families early. These issues, along with the adversarial process of

investigations, make it very difficult for Inuit to do this work while living in their home communities.

We heard ideas about hiring more Inuit to work in a supportive role in child protection where they can gain experience while completing a BSW. People expressed interest in distance education and in professional development opportunities that build Inuit knowledge and skill within their communities, and increase much needed staffing positions within child protection. Similar program models have been implemented in other Canadian jurisdictions. Increasing Inuit education and skills in the overall field of children's services will be an important development to improve services now, as well as positioning Nunatsiavut Government to assume responsibility for these services in the future.

We are aware that some administrative support positions in offices on the north coast may go unfilled for extended periods of time. People told of their frustrations when they could not have a phone call answered or the office open to the public in some cases. We experienced this as well. When families or caregivers are involved in child protection matters, they must be able to contact a real person and get a response when they reach out for help, guidance, or information.

When families or caregivers are involved in child protection matters, they must be able to contact a real person and get a response when they reach out for help, guidance, or information.

While vacancies are frustrating to the public, and to professionals attempting to reach social work staff, it is also problematic for social workers. They rely on their administrative support to assist them in their daily work. Without such support, more administrative duties fall to social workers. This is not where their efforts and energies should go. We understand that job competitions have been repeatedly posted for some administrative support positions without results. If a job competition is posted repeatedly

and does not offer possible candidates, this is unlikely to change in a small community. It is clear that another approach must be employed.

People talked about multiple social workers being assigned to a child's file over time because of high turnover. The highest number of social workers we saw on a file was eleven. Each time a new social worker is assigned, the child and family has to start over from the beginning with the new worker. This is not a good way to build trust and continuity for the child, and to develop a plan with the family that builds on their assets and strengths.

We can say without a doubt that child protection is one of the most difficult professional roles. It is not a perfect science under the best of circumstances, and decisions weigh heavy. It is hard for a social worker to be in an authority role investigating parents and families and at the same time expect families to enter into a trusting relationship. Yet social workers know that relationships bring about change more than rules or contracts. We found staff to be concerned and caring about their work and the children they are entrusted to protect. In professional social work education, students learn that regardless of their field of social work practice, they will be agents of change. For many social workers who work in Indigenous child protection, they likely feel this mission falls short. As public servants, they must follow the laws and policies which govern their work and which often leave them with too few options to intervene.

We know that child protection work can take a toll. This is reflected in the stress associated with the nature of the responsibilities, the heavy workloads, lack of resources and organizational supports, the complexity of the cases, the limited experience of many staff, the frequent staff turnover and vacancies, the lack of direct access to mentoring and clinical supervision, the isolation from families and home communities, and the stigma and negativity associated with their work and department. There is fear of liability which creates heightened anxiety. They know many people do not trust them.

Enforcing child protection laws can be a lonely place. The cost of caring and the cost of doing this work without the appropriate supports puts the very staff who are responsible for protecting children at risk. Systemic changes are needed for children and families, but also for the staff who are expected to ensure children's safety and protection. The

Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development would benefit from regularly engaging its social workers, particularly those serving in Indigenous communities, to discuss how to support their work in order to improve the nature and quality of child protection services, to enhance recruitment and retention, to improve their sense of well-being and job satisfaction.

i. Fear and Mistrust

Families and communities displayed a consistent and high level of fear and mistrust towards the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. Young people and adults specifically told us they are fearful when interacting with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development because something they say might mean they have to be removed from their family and community. This has contributed to the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development having a negative public image within Inuit communities and being seen as a system to be avoided. Some participants told us they avoid seeking help from other services such as the police, health providers, and safe shelters, because they fear going on the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development's radar.

Parents and family members also talked about their fears that their children would become accustomed to a life of advantage, money and opportunities outside Inuit communities. They are concerned how they will compete with this when their children return home, or how their children will cope with losing these advantages. They fear conflict as their children try to settle back home, especially at a very fragile time for the family.

Some of the reasons for fear and mistrust are clearly historical and involve the trauma of colonization and a related fear of government and outsiders. It can reflect people's own negative childhood experiences with child welfare and other authorities. It also reflects current realities such as the number of Inuit children removed from their homes, communities, and culture for extended periods of time and the lack of value placed in Inuit ways and knowledge.

“Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth-sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harm.”

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015c)

j. Empowerment

We heard repeatedly that Inuit are not empowered and supported to do everything possible for children and families in their communities. This is a matter of respect and trust for them. Mainstream policies often clash with Inuit values. Parents, grandparents and families expressed feeling powerless as a result of lengthy periods of time between visits with their children, court delays extending over many months, and not being able to be informed by or communicate with decision-makers involved with their family. Safety and family-centred action plans are not viewed by parents, grandparents and kin as a collaborative process where there is shared decision-making on expectations. We often heard they are not involved in developing these plans. They are so overwhelmed with the authority of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and the fear of their children being taken that they lack the confidence to challenge or question the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development decisions. They expect Nunatsiavut Government to have greater power to ensure cultural relevance and respect in decision-making. Participants talked about the importance of being treated as equals if there is any hope for true and meaningful change. This applies to individuals as well as to their government.

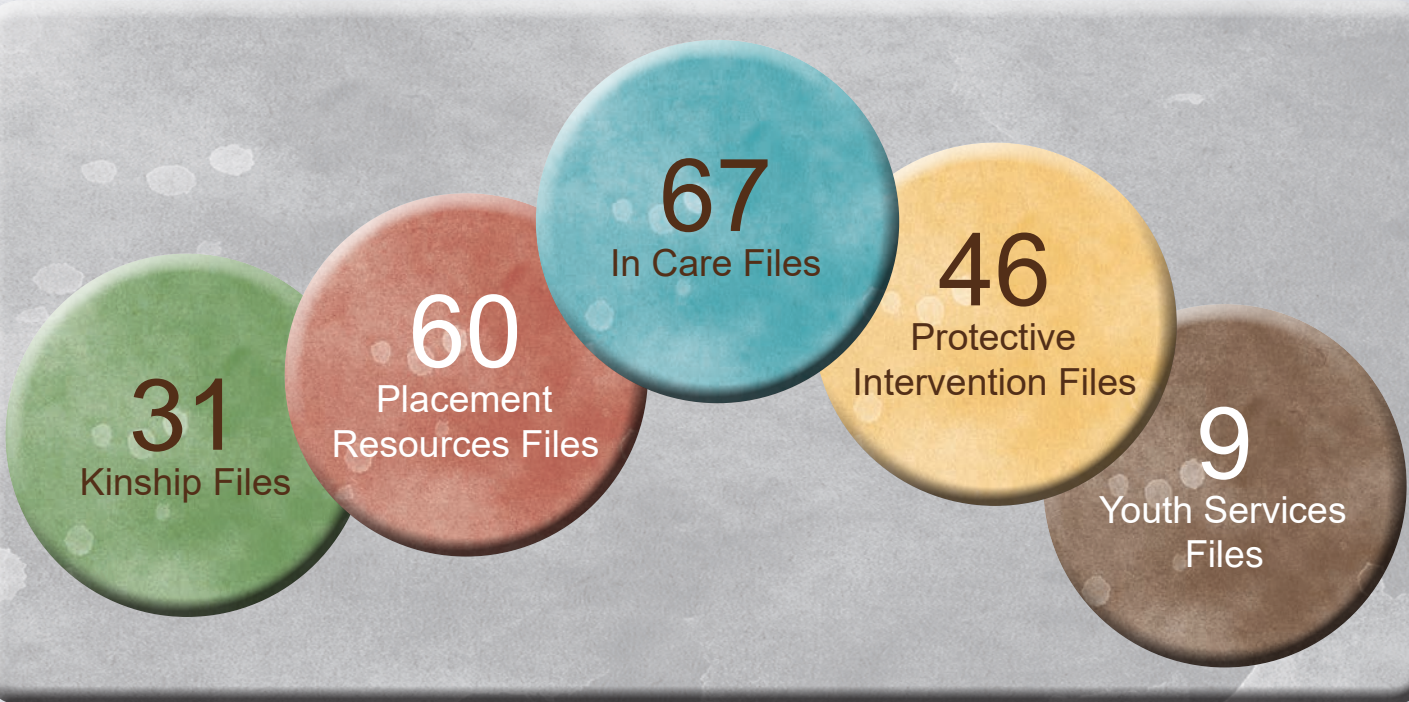
Throughout our advocacy work, we have also observed challenges because social work staff are not sufficiently empowered to make decisions, and must frequently rely on bureaucratic processes in St. John's for approvals. While staff on the ground recognize the unique challenges of living in a remote northern community and what that means for children and their families, they may have little authority to make an immediate decision. They frequently rely on a decision-maker in St. John's who is completely removed from the daily reality in an isolated and remote Indigenous community on the north coast of Labrador.



Makkovik

5. File Review

We conducted a comprehensive file review of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development services to Inuit children. We requested and reviewed 213 files from the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development based on the files that were active as of December 2017. In selecting these files, we ensured all Inuit communities and programs were represented. The file breakdown is as follows:

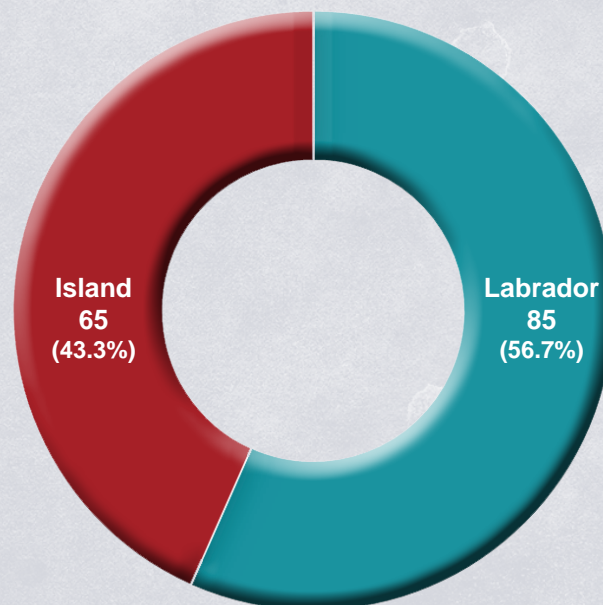


In reviewing the files, we looked at specific areas that are important to ensure the needs of Inuit children are being met. These areas included: social work supports, cultural connections, collaboration with Nunatsiavut Government, consultation with children and youth, access with parents and extended family, supports and services for children and families, and file supervision/monitoring. We did this because we committed to examine how current services are meeting the needs of Inuit children. The file review added balance and contributed to the broader analysis.

a. In Care Program

This section discusses our findings of In Care Program files. In Care services are provided to children/youth being cared for by the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development on a temporary or continuous basis because they have been removed from their parent's care. A separate In Care file is opened for each child when removed from their parent's care. We reviewed a total of 67 In Care files (44 on the island, 20 in Nunatsiavut and 3 elsewhere in Labrador). The actual number of Inuit children in care was 150, with 85 in Labrador and 65 on the island.

Actual Number of Inuit Children in Care



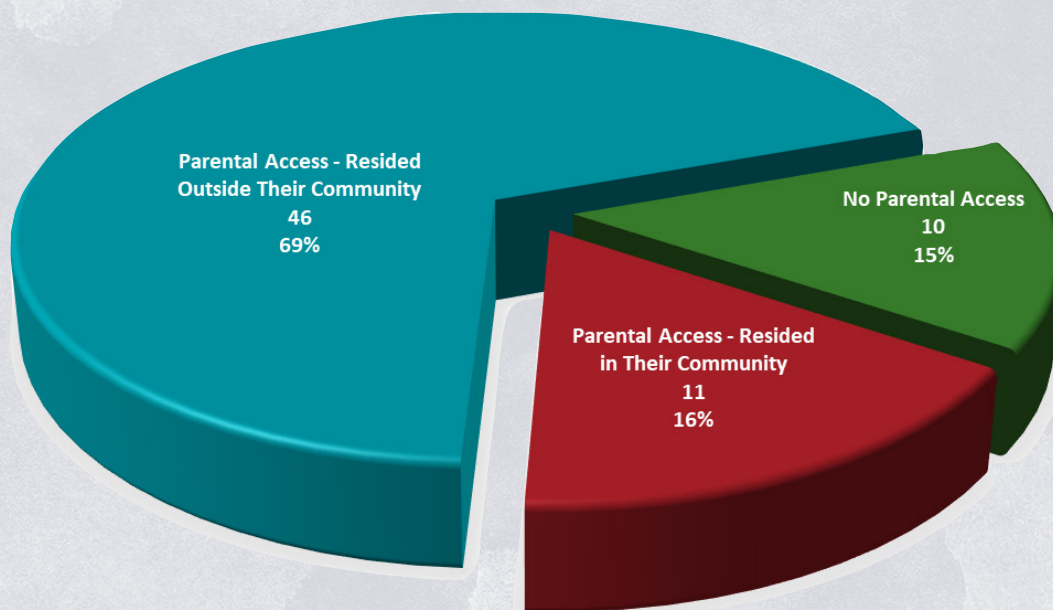
We found in our sample:

- ◆ 18 children/youth were in a home of their culture but not their home community;
- ◆ 11 children/youth were in a home within their community;
- ◆ 7 children/youth were in a caregiver home with relatives;
- ◆ 44 children/youth were placed outside Labrador; and
- ◆ 20 children/youth were placed in Nunatsiavut.

We observed that some children/youth who were in temporary care exceeded the maximum of 18 months they should be in care according to the **Children and Youth Care and Protection Act (2010)**. Children/youth in our sample age six and above spent on average 35 months in temporary care. Those under six years spent on average 23 months in temporary care. The custodial status of the children/youth as either temporary or continuous was not always clear or evident. Of the 67 files reviewed, 29 children/youth were in continuous custody. Permanency planning often includes consideration for adoption, however, adoption of Inuit children is a complex process that requires significant input from Nunatsiavut Government. For some of these children/youth, the permanent plan is to remain in foster care and return to an Inuit community if a home becomes available. While permanency planning for children in care is critical, many of the files do not reflect any measurable steps being undertaken to achieve this.

i. Access with Parents/Extended Family/Significant Others

It is vital for children to have parental and family access if they are unable to live with their parents and it is safe to do so. We examined the 67 files to see how often children were able to visit with their parents during the period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2017. We found:



We explored the frequency of parental access for the 46 children who were placed outside their home communities:

Parental Access When Child Resides Outside Home Community

Frequency	Children/ Youth placed in Labrador	Children/ Youth placed on the Island	Total
Monthly (at least once per month)	0	1	1
Regular access (every six to eight weeks)	4	7	11
Less than regular (every 10 to 12 weeks)	1	1	2
Sporadic (more than 12 weeks apart)	0	5	5
Minimal (three visits or less per year)	2	11	13
*Mixed (change in pattern of frequency)	2	12	14
Total	9	37	46
*Mixed access generally happens when there is a move or significant change in circumstances.			

The majority of this parental access occurred outside the child's/youth's home community. We understand that the frequency of visits for each child is different, but generally we saw no consistency for access. We can conclude that while the intent for access appears to be every six to eight weeks, this goal was not reached in every case. We were encouraged to see that more than half of the files indicated that foster parents

or residential staff accompanied children/youth on visits to their home community.

We found many issues affected access with parents. These include:

- ◆ Weather
- ◆ Court orders
- ◆ Cancellations by parents and social workers
- ◆ Risk to children
- ◆ Presence of behavioral issues after visits
- ◆ Reminders of trauma in home communities that would have a detrimental impact on children
- ◆ Lack of respite homes available for children in their home community
- ◆ Reluctance of child/youth to return to Labrador
- ◆ Delays in rescheduling visits

ii. Sibling and Extended Family Contact

When children and youth are placed away from their family they may not always be placed with their siblings. They may also have adult siblings with whom they have relationships. Sibling access is necessary to ensure that children and youth maintain family connections. They often share unique bonds, experiences and relationships with their brothers and sisters.

In Care files showed that in 49 of the 67 files, children and youth had siblings residing outside the foster home. Among this group, 36 had fewer than 12 sibling visits, while eight had no contact. We were discouraged by this infrequent contact between siblings.

We looked at the contact children and youth had with extended family or significant others.

Contact with Extended Family or Significant Others

Frequency of Contact	#
Regular Contact (at least monthly)	10
Sporadic Contact	41
No Contact	16
Total Files Reviewed	67

iii. Cultural Connections

It is important to ensure Inuit children and youth are connected to their culture. We looked for evidence of this, including the use of Inuktitut language. We found that of the 67 files:

- ◆ 42 had evidence that the child/youth had opportunities to learn and explore cultural practices and traditions in some form
- ◆ 23 showed that the child/youth had exposure to Inuktitut language
- ◆ 2 showed that the child/youth had been offered interpretation services
- ◆ Approximately one quarter of the files had evidence of culturally specific services/ interventions, consults with family/Elders/significant others and involvement with Nunatsiavut Government regarding planning for a child/youth.

Given a child's right to their language, we are very troubled with the finding that approximately one third of the children in care had exposure to Inuktitut.

iv. Social Work Contact

Social workers are responsible to provide regular in-person contact with children and youth In Care. This contact is critical for hearing the voices of children and youth, and ensuring that they can actively participate in decisions regarding their care. This contact is vital to provide better information for social work decisions.

Social work contact for children in care looked different depending on where children were placed. Most children placed on the Island received social work monthly contact at a rate of 90%. The rate of monthly social work contact for children placed in Labrador was 53%. Three children/youth had no evidence of contact with a social worker in more than six months. All of the files reflected multiple social workers on files, with children and youth having between one and 11 social workers. Most had between one and three social workers.

v. In Care Progress Reports

An In Care Progress Report (IPR) is used for case planning and monitoring outcomes for children and youth. The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development requires IPRs to be developed and updated at a minimum of every six months (Department of Children Seniors and Social Development Protection and In Care Policy and Procedure Manual, 2011). These reports contain crucial information about a child's life in care.

In Care Progress Reports

In Care Progress Report(s) on file	Island Placement	Labrador Placement	Total
Yes	41	13	54
No	1	6	7
Not Due	2	4	6
Total	44	23	67

Planning for children in care is supported through an In Care Planning Team. Teams may include the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development officials, parents, other professionals, as well as significant others or community partners (Department of Children Seniors and Social Development Protection and In Care Policy and Procedure Manual, 2011).

We found that of the 67 files:

- ◆ 5 included parents as part of the team
- ◆ 1 identified extended family as part of the team
- ◆ 1 child older than 12 was part of the team
- ◆ 1 identified representatives from Nunatsiavut Government as part of the team
- ◆ 27 included other professionals

We found little collaboration with parents, extended family, significant others, and Nunatsiavut Government in Planning Teams for children in care.

b. Protective Intervention Program

This section discusses our findings for the Protective Intervention Program. Social workers provide protective intervention services when a child is, or is at risk of maltreatment. Social work involvement is required to ensure the safety and well-being of children. We reviewed 46 files of families residing in Labrador who were receiving Protective Intervention Services. These files included 107 children.

i. Investigation and Assessment

We reviewed the most recent child protection referrals on the active Protective Intervention files. Of the 46 files, we found five files without evidence that the initial referrals had been investigated.

Social workers used various tools and approaches to assist in their investigation, assessment and case planning services. The model included the following:

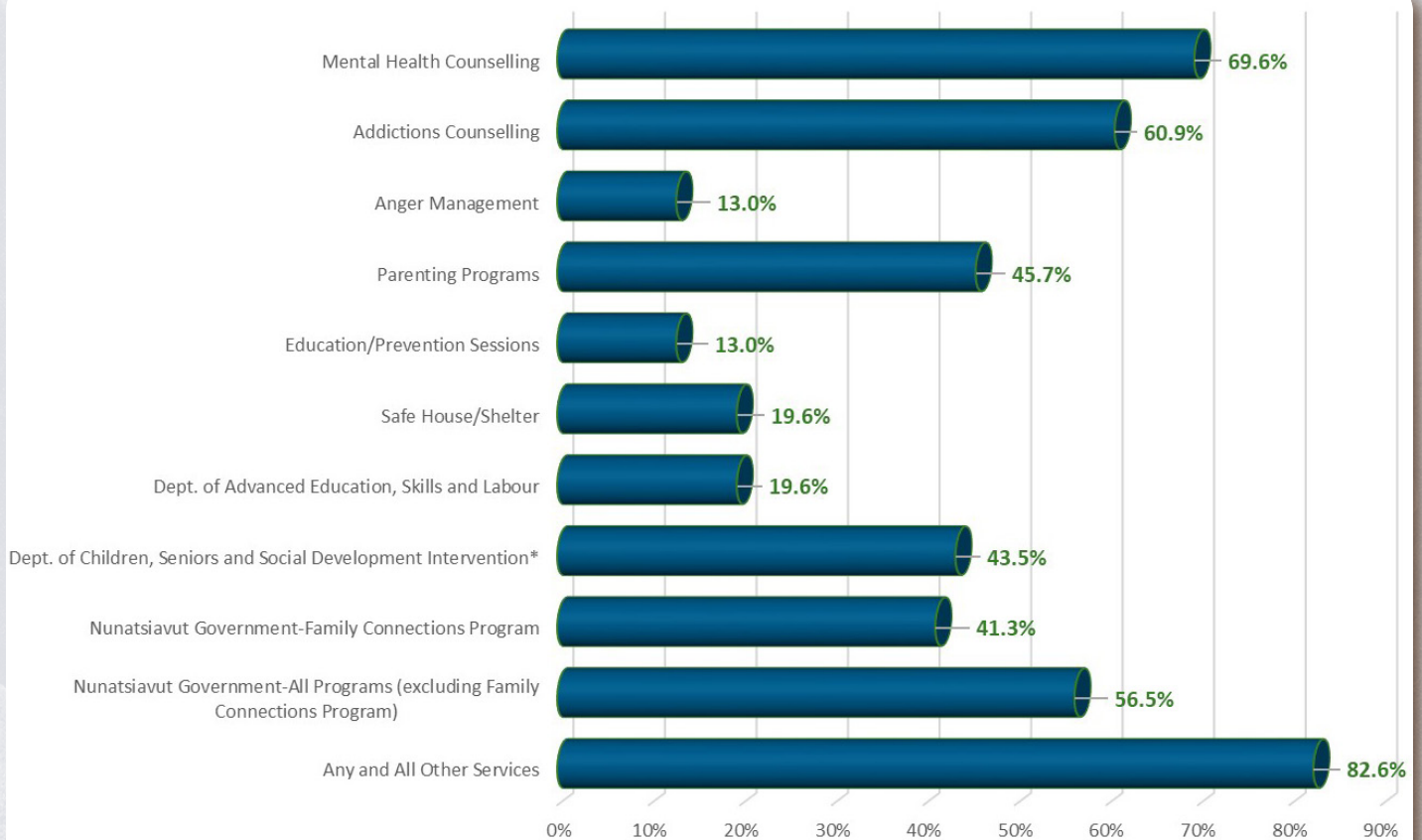
- ◆ Safety Assessments assist in determining the immediate safety of the child.
 - ✧ 28 of the 46 files had safety assessments completed.
- ◆ Safety Plans are required if interventions are necessary to ensure the safety of the children during the investigation.
 - ✧ 15 of the 46 files showed no evidence that Safety Plans were completed.
- ◆ Assessment Investigative Summaries are used to summarize and document the child protection investigation.
 - ✧ 33 of the 46 files contained an Assessment Investigative Summary.
- ◆ Risk Assessment Instrument assists in identifying the factors that place the child at future risk of maltreatment. A risk assessment is also one of the key tools used to identify services and supports necessary to reduce risk to children.
 - ✧ 24 of the 42 eligible files had Risk Assessment Instruments completed.
- ◆ The Family Centered Action Plan is the primary planning tool used to identify interventions targeted at risk reduction. These plans provide an opportunity for social workers to collaborate with children and families in identifying both family and individual strengths. Family input is important to ensure risk is reduced for children.
 - ✧ 10 of the 42 eligible files had a Family Centered Action Plan.



ii. Services and Interventions

More than 80% of families engaged in some type of service/intervention as part of protective intervention planning. The services mostly included mental health and addictions. In some files the service provider was not always clear.

Service Intervention



*This may include, for example, specialist services, child management specialist services, and other family support services.

iii. Collaborative Case Planning

In some of the files, we saw evidence of planning meetings with families, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, and Nunatsiavut Government's Family Connections workers. We heard that involvement with Nunatsiavut Government, and in particular the Family Connections Program, contributes to better experiences for children and families. The Family Connections Program provides a strong voice. These families were more engaged and services were better coordinated.

Evidence of some collaborative case planning was found in 57% of the files reviewed. This ranged from one phone call to multiple meetings. Examples of those involved include Elders, extended families, Nunatsiavut Government, cultural services and other professionals. There is significant benefit in collaborating, however the practice is lacking.

iv. Removals

Children on protective intervention caseloads may be deemed at significant risk of harm. Some of these children can only be protected by removing them from the care and custody of their parents or guardians. Of the 46 family files involving protection intervention services, 24 involved removal of the children. Of the 24 files involving removals, we found:

- ◆ 3 files showed counselling was provided to children after removal
- ◆ 22 files had the Plan for the Child completed and filed with the court
- ◆ 20 Plans for the Child outlined arrangements to support the child's identity and cultural and community connections
- ◆ 21 Plans for the Child identified services and interventions to address child protection concerns
- ◆ All Plans for the Child outlined efforts to maintain the child's contact with parents, family and significant others
- ◆ 18 of the files indicate the Plan for the Child was shared with parents
- ◆ 5 of 7 files that had children age 12 or over had evidence they were served with

legal documents related to the removal (as required by law)

v. Access with Parents

Where children are removed, contact with parents or guardians should normally be maintained. For the 24 families where children were removed, all children had some level of access to their parents.

- ◆ 9 had access at least weekly
- ◆ 10 had access every four to six weeks
- ◆ 5 had sporadic access

We examined access delays. Delays or suspensions of visits occurred in 65% of files. There were many reasons including parent/guardian cancellation, social worker cancellation, transportation issues, weather cancellations, court orders, court dates, and parent or child awaiting required services prior to visit occurring.

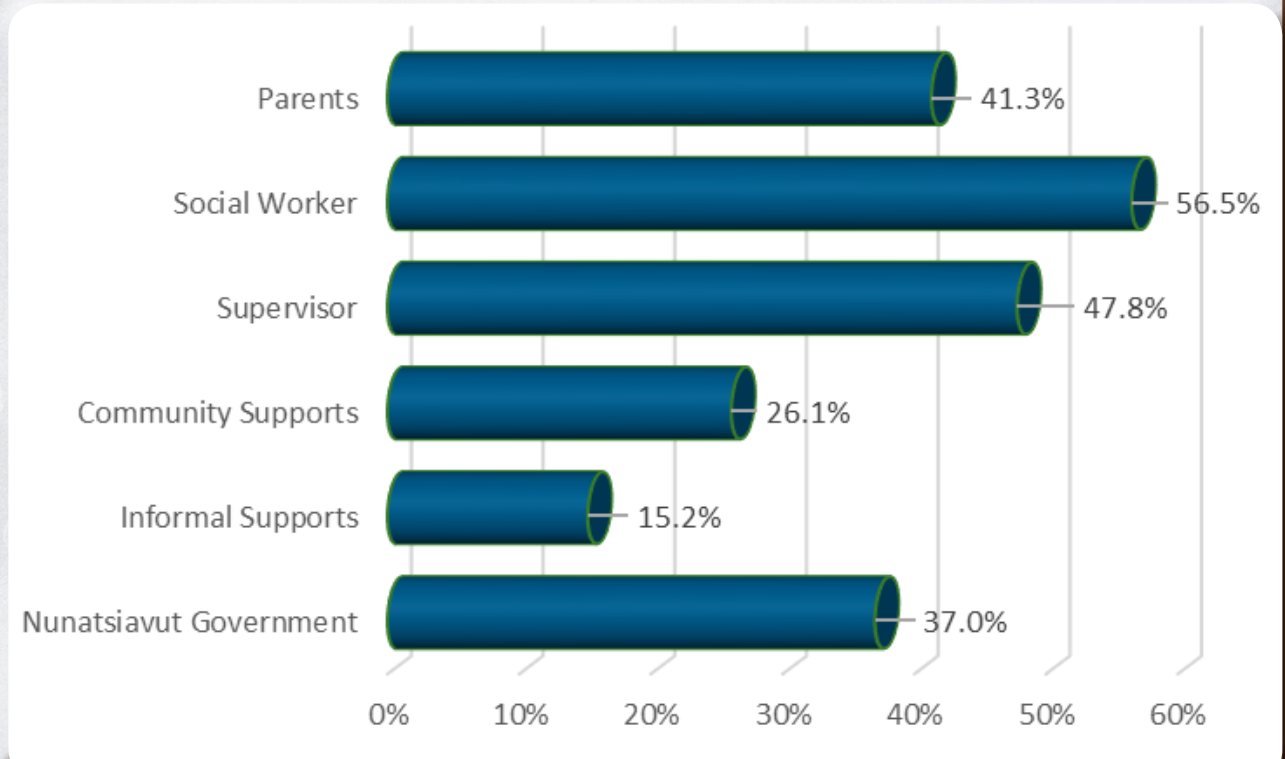
vi. Social Work Contact

We examined social work monthly contact. The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development policy does not set out minimum requirements for how often families on protective intervention caseloads must be seen by a Social Worker. We found:

- ◆ Contact ranged from one visit in 20 months to at least one monthly visit for 36 months
- ◆ 24 families had a monthly visit rate of 50% or less
- ◆ 2 files showed no evidence of contact

We examined evidence of case conferences and who participated. Fifty-seven percent of files show that a case conference had occurred after the most recent opening of the protective intervention service.

Case Conference Involvement by Role



c. Youth Services Program

This section discusses our findings for the Youth Services Program. The Youth Services Program is a voluntary program for youth. The goal of this program is to help youth transition to early adulthood by connecting them with services and supports. This program assists youth who are:

- ◆ At risk of maltreatment and can no longer reside with their parents
- ◆ At risk of being asked to leave the family home
- ◆ Transitioning to the Youth Services Program from the In Care Program
- ◆ Transitioning home from the In Care Program and requesting support to assist with the transition

(Department of Children Seniors and Social Development Protection and In Care Policy and Procedure Manual, 2011).

We reviewed nine files in this category and found:

- ◆ 3 youth were in Nunatsiavut
- ◆ 4 youth were outside Nunatsiavut but in Labrador
- ◆ 1 youth was on the island
- ◆ 1 youth was in another province

i. Youth Services Agreements/Plans

A Youth Services Agreement outlines the responsibilities of the youth, and the Department of Children Seniors and Social Development. A Youth Services Plan is developed based on goals identified by the youth and with the social worker's support.

Collaboration with youth is critical and they have a right to be consulted on planning for their care. It is important that youth understand the program and their options. A Youth Services Agreement contains a general provision that a youth may seek legal advice prior to signing the agreement. This is important because a youth may opt out of services at 16 and needs to do so with a full understanding of the implications, as they cannot opt in again. When they sign an agreement it formalizes their agreement with government, their obligations, and what they can expect to receive in supports and finances. Given their age, it is important to ensure their interests are protected and their decisions are informed. The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development needs to make improvements to ensure that youth understand this provision and can access a lawyer when signing agreements.

We found:

- ◆ All nine files contained a signed Youth Services Agreement
- ◆ 8 youth were transitioning from the In Care Program
- ◆ 2 files indicated a youth had opportunity to talk with a lawyer prior to signing the Youth Service Agreement
- ◆ None of the files showed that a guardian, support person, or legal representative was present during the signing of the Youth Services Agreement

- ◆ 8 files had a review of the Youth Services Agreement within the previous six months
- ◆ 7 files contained a Youth Services Plan
- ◆ Most Youth Services Plans identified needs/goals for housing, physical health, mental health and/or addictions, life skills, education/vocation, social relationships, and recreation or leisure
- ◆ 2 Youth Service Plans contained sections completed by the youth reflecting their own comments

ii. Maintaining Cultural Connection

We observed some evidence of connection to family, Elders and significant others in four of the files. Most of the youth transitioned from the In Care program, and may have spent time away from their community and family. When a youth has been In Care and living away from their family, it is important for them to have the necessary supports to help strengthen their Inuit identity when transitioning to the Youth Services program.

iii. Social Work Contact

Social work contact refers to the interaction Social Workers have with youth as part of the Youth Services Plan. This may include telephone and in person contact. We found:

- ◆ 3 youth had face to face meetings with a social worker either monthly or more frequently
- ◆ 5 youth had face to face contact with the social worker in the previous 30 days
- ◆ 1 file showed no indication of any meetings with the social worker

iv. Transition Planning

Transition planning refers to the process used to assist youth with meeting the challenges of adulthood and transferring from one government program to another. Transition planning within the Youth Services Program may begin when a youth is transitioning from the In Care Program or as part of preparation for when Youth Services

ends. Generally, a Youth Services Agreement does not continue beyond a youth's 18th birthday. A youth may have their agreement extended if they were in care or custody prior to their 16th birthday or if they are attending school (Department of Children Seniors and Social Development Protection and In Care Policy and Procedure Manual, 2011).

The average age of youth in our sample was 18 years old. All were close to independent living and would become eligible for Income Support programs, increasing the importance of transition planning and information sharing. We found:

- ◆ 4 files where youth were transitioning from the In Care Program had evidence that transition plans had been developed, however we could not locate these plans on the Youth Services files
- ◆ 3 files indicated that the youth was informed of their options when transitioning from In Care
- ◆ 3 files identified needs and goals for transition planning when Youth Services ends
- ◆ Only one file contained a referral to the Supporting Youth with Transitions Program. This is a voluntary program that provides specific life skills support in areas that may include housing, education, money management, etc. Youth are eligible for this program if they receive residential services through a Youth Services Agreement.

These findings showed a lack of comprehensive transition planning for youth who are at a vulnerable stage in life. We could not locate some information in the Youth Services files such as transition plans and meeting notes. When information is missing from files, the new Youth Services social worker will not have all the information required to ensure continuity of service. More must be done to assist youth with transitioning to independent living.

d. Placement Resources/Foster Homes and Other

The Department of Children Seniors and Social Development uses a number of placement options for children and youth who are in temporary or continuous custody. We looked at two types of foster homes: Relative or Significant Other Homes, and Regular Foster Homes. The best interest of the child guides placement considerations, meaning relatives and individuals significant to the child should be considered first.

We reviewed 60 foster home files, with 36 in Labrador, and 24 on the island. The approval process for each type of placement is different. Regular foster homes require the Parent Resources for Information Development and Education Program (PRIDE) to be completed whereas the Relative/Significant Other homes do not have this requirement to receive full approval. This training is designed to support the role of the foster parents and strengthen services for the children in their care. We found more regular foster homes on the island received PRIDE, than in Labrador. In 2010, Nunatsiavut Government's Department of Health and Social Development led the development of an adapted version of PRIDE training to include cultural relevance (PRIDE 2013). Despite this, none of the foster parents on the Island that participated in this Independent Review received the adapted PRIDE training.

Regular foster homes are required to be reviewed annually. There was a higher number of outstanding annual reviews for regular foster homes in Labrador than on the island. It is also concerning that some regular foster homes caring for children remain approved temporarily with no explanation on file as to why full approval had not been granted. This applied to twelve regular foster homes in Labrador, eight of which had children placed in them. One regular foster home file showed the most recent annual review was in 1997.

i. Foster Home Investigations

The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development Policy (2011) states that all allegations of maltreatment of a child placed in a foster home shall be assessed to determine if an investigation is required. We did not see a standardized approach to address allegations or concerns in foster homes.

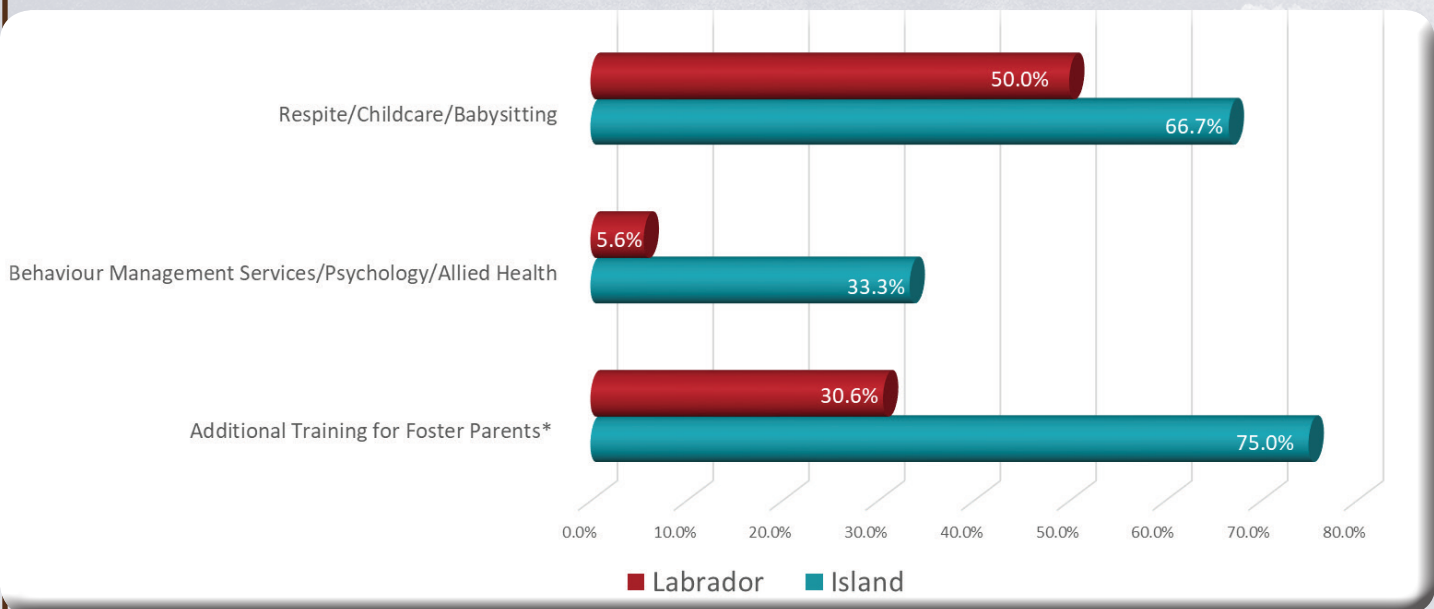
Concerns or allegations were identified in 12 homes, and the files showed:

- ◆ 4 were assessed as requiring an investigation with evidence of completed investigations on file
- ◆ 4 were assessed but did not require a formal investigation
- ◆ 2 files had no clear evidence of any action
- ◆ 1 file showed the foster parent was removed from the home
- ◆ 1 file showed concerns were addressed other than as a maltreatment investigation

ii. Foster Home Supports

We examined supports provided to foster homes in our sample such as additional training, services for children, and supports for foster parents including respite/child care and babysitting. Foster homes on the island showed higher access to these supports than homes in Labrador.

Foster Home Supports



*Additional training includes: suicide intervention, intergenerational trauma, first aid, cultural sensitivity, etc.).

iii. Cultural Connections

Many foster parents expressed a lack of cultural preparedness for bringing Inuit children into their homes, and indicated a desire to have support and resources that would help children maintain their connection to Inuit culture. Some families received resources related to Inuit culture including calendars, Internet sites and books. This appeared to be more related to specific requests as opposed to a standardized approach. The files indicated that foster parents have expressed a desire and willingness to receive more training. The existing cultural supports to foster parents, and the cultural connection plans for children is inadequate and often lacks depth.

There was evidence of foster parents reporting positive relationships with birth parents and providing support for children to see their families by accompanying them to their home communities. There was also evidence of foster parents welcoming parents and extended families into their homes. Some foster parents displayed Inuit art and photos throughout their homes.

iv. Social Work Contact

We experienced challenges in determining the number of social workers assigned to a foster home. Foster parents interacted with a number of social workers in various roles. We found that foster homes on the Island had more turnover of assigned social workers than those in Labrador.

The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development policy directs that a social worker should have at least one monthly in-person contact with the foster home where a child or youth is residing (Department of Children Seniors and Social Development Protection and In Care Policy and Procedure Manual, 2011). We found that 22 of the 24 foster home files that we examined on the Island had regular monthly social work contact. In some of the 36 files for foster homes in Labrador, we could not identify the rate of contact. Furthermore, we could not always determine how many children were in the home, who was the assigned social worker, or if regular visits were occurring.

e. Kinship Care Program

The Kinship Services Program enables children to be cared for by relatives or significant others when they require care outside their home. This involves a voluntary agreement among parent, kin and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. This could be generally part of a Protective Intervention Plan. Kinship care allows children to stay connected with their family, community and culture. We reviewed 31 kinship files, all located in Labrador. The majority of children were placed in a Kinship Home in their home community.

i. Kinship Home Assessments and Kinship Care Agreements

A potential Kinship home requires a social worker to complete a Kinship Home Assessment to ensure the well-being, safety, and protection of the child. This assessment includes all records checks, police checks, and interviews with the kinship caregiver and visits to the home. Kinship Care Agreements represent the formal agreement for services with the kinship caregiver. Once signed these agreements must be reviewed regularly, within 3 months for the first review, and every 6 months thereafter (Department of Children Seniors and Social Development Protection and In Care Policy and Procedure Manual, 2011).

We found:

- ◆ 17 files had a Kinship Home Assessment completed
- ◆ 22 had Kinship Care Agreements completed
- ◆ 7 had no evidence of a review

ii. Cultural Connections

Given that the majority of children in Kinship Care in this sample were placed in their home community, and in a home of their culture, we believe cultural connection is assumed. We also found some evidence of Nunatsiavut Government involvement regarding specific services for these children/youth.

iii. Planning for Children

The preferred plan for children in kinship placements is reunification with parents. In cases where reunification cannot occur, alternative permanency plans must be explored. In the 31 files we found:

Planning for Children in Kinship Placements

	#
Plan for Reunification Identified	17
Kin had Legal Custody; No Other Plan Required	5
Reunification Not Sought; No Other Plan Noted	4
Insufficient Evidence of a Plan	5
Total Files Reviewed	31



iv. Social Work Contact/Support

Social workers are required to have a minimum of one in person contact with a child or youth when the Kinship Agreement is reviewed (Department of Children Seniors and Social Development Protection and In Care Policy and Procedure Manual, 2011). Our analysis identified limited support for children and kinship caregivers, and lack of consultation with service providers for children. We found:

Social Work Contact/Support for Children in Kinship Placements

Social Work Supports	#
Consultation with Mental Health or Addictions-Related Services (counselling, psychology, psychiatry, or alternate healing services)	8
Referral for Mental Health Counselling	4
Consultation with Daycare, After School Programming or Respite Services	10
Consultation with Behavior Management Services or Parenting Education-Related Services	8
Consultation with Medical Services (excluding Psychiatry)	1
Consultation with Education Services	1
Consultation with Allied Health Services (occupational therapy, physiotherapy, public health, dietetics, or audiology)	7
Kinship Caregiver Requests (mostly for respite)	6
No In-Person Social Worker contact in Previous 6 Months	8



Hopedale

6. Literature Review

Much has been written about child welfare services to Indigenous children and youth. The list of recommendations and the calls to action are long. While this section is not exhaustive on all the literature available, it identifies significant findings and directions of Commissions, Inquiries and other research relevant to this Independent Review. It also provides promising or best practices that offer insight to a path for change and improved outcomes.

Relationships and reconciliation is at the heart of many reports, and is a constantly recurring theme. In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recognized the need to rebuild relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous authorities. The Commission was formed to examine how Canada could create a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples. The Commission's report and 440 recommendations called for mutual recognition, respect of Aboriginal rights, healing, sharing of economic and resource benefits and the highest standards of responsibility, honesty and good faith toward one another (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 1996). One of the Commission's most significant implemented recommendations was the recommendation for a public inquiry into residential school abuse. This inquiry is what we know today as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was officially launched in 2008 to guide Canadians through the difficult discussion of the residential school system and lay the foundation for lasting reconciliation across Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission emphasized the importance of relationships with Indigenous peoples as one of its principles: "Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harm". It also stated that reconciliation must take constructive actions and create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a).

In June 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c). Its Calls to Action were aimed at

working towards reconciliation and renewing relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The first of the five Calls to Action speak directly to child welfare systems in Canada and call on governments to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care by:

- ◆ Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations
- ◆ Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside
- ◆ Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools
- ◆ Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing
- ◆ Requiring that all child welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.

The remaining four Calls To Action on child welfare call on all levels of government to collaborate to annually publish data on children in care, to fully implement Jordan's Principle, to enact Aboriginal child welfare legislation, and to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.

Indigenous authority and control over child welfare services emerges as an essential recommendation throughout the literature. The importance of Indigenous peoples' right to establish and maintain their own child welfare systems was clearly noted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action. Research internationally and in Canada has shown a strong relationship between improved outcomes for Indigenous peoples and meaningful self-government (Rae, 2011).

In June 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls released its final report (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

and Girls, 2019). Reclaiming Power and Place delivers a harsh judgment of Canada's treatment of these vulnerable populations. The report concludes that historical racial and gendered human rights abuses continue today. It identifies failures in Canada's commitments to meaningfully implement many international declarations and treaties, including the **United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child**. The report is critical of the lack of funding and supports provided to grassroots community based groups and organizations, and identifies short-term and project-based funding as not sustainable, not enabling longterm change, and ultimately not respectful. Reclaiming Power and Place concludes that colonial and patriarchal models of governance have served to disempower Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA people from their traditional leadership roles.

The United Nations adopted the **Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** in 2007. It speaks to the rights of Indigenous peoples to be free of discrimination and addresses their rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health, education, self-determination, and other rights (United Nations, 2007). There is particular recognition that Indigenous families and communities retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education, and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights and culture of the child. It speaks of the right to live as distinctive peoples without fear of children being forcibly removed to another group. The Declaration addresses children's right to an education in their own culture and language when living outside their communities. Furthermore, Indigenous women and children must be able to benefit from protections from all forms of violence and discrimination.

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates has identified Indigenous children's rights as a key issue and has pledged to ensure the rights of Aboriginal children and youth are kept at the forefront of its advocacy work. The Council is guided by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** in promoting children's rights to health, safety, education and well-being and recognizing families as the fundamental and natural environment for children's growth and well-being. The Council stated its support for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's reconciliation process as involving a healing journey. The Council issued a Declaration of Reconciliation on June 1, 2015 and recognized that reconciliation requires appreciating the past, learning from it, and building a future together. For youth reconciliation, the Council is clear that this

must involve youth actively in defining their future (Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, 2015). It acknowledged Aboriginal children as among the most marginalized and vulnerable groups of children in Canada. The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates also issued a statement in January 2018 after participating in the federal government's emergency meeting on Indigenous child welfare. The Council affirmed its commitment to coordinated solutions, immediate action, reconciliation, and Indigenous self-determination especially in caring for their children. The Council called for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action to be implemented. It identified the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** as the cornerstone of all children's rights, and that children and youth voices must be central to any processes to improve their lives (Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, 2018).

British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth offered valuable lessons in **Delegated Aboriginal Agencies: How Resourcing Affects Service Delivery (2017)**. In reviewing delegated Aboriginal authorities for child welfare, the Representative cautioned about insufficient resources and inequitable and inconsistent funding to Indigenous groups undermining effective service delivery and contributing to children being removed from their homes. The report speaks to the needs for greater and more comprehensive services because of the unique and complex circumstances of intergenerational trauma and effects of colonialist policies. In short, these children and their families require more, not less services. For Aboriginal children and families involved with the child welfare system, the current assessment tools individualize problems without looking at the structural issues contributing to child safety concerns. This individualized approach does not reflect Aboriginal culture and practices, nor their history as oppressed peoples.

In **Voices for Change: Aboriginal Child Welfare in Alberta (2016)**, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate reported that compared to others, Aboriginal families are more likely to be brought to the attention of the child welfare system, more likely to have their children taken into care, more likely to have their children stay in care longer, and less likely to have their children reunited with their families (British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development 2009; Sinha et al., 2011; Trocmé, MacLaurin, Fallon, Knocke, Pitman & McCormack, 2006). Many participants in their consultation process believed that the continued high number of Aboriginal people in care was like a new

residential school system, robbing them of their self-confidence, language and culture. In the Alberta Advocate's consultations, people frequently talked about lost potential as a common theme. Participating youth identified very modest and stark wants and desires in wanting a job, to finish school, and saying they preferred not to be homeless. Many participants said that families should be understood to be more than parents and include siblings, grandparents, and other extended family members. Separating children from their parents often means separating them from all these supports. These relationships are even more important when there are challenges at home. Community members have relationships and a collective sense of responsibility to the child, and it is important that these are supported.

This report also speaks to the prevalence of the Euro-Canadian worldview on parenting and individualist focus on the nuclear family. Aboriginal peoples' collective and community approach to family and child rearing includes extended family, and this may be misunderstood as neglectful parenting. However the reality is that the broader reach of extended family and community in caring for and raising a child has benefits that are frequently missed in the current child welfare system.

Research indicates that a strong sense of community is the most significant factor in maintaining cultural identity (deSouza & Rymaarz, 2007). In order for culture to be passed along generational lines, one generation must be able to pass its beliefs and practices along to its children. It is important for young people to maintain contact with significant people in their lives.

The Touchstones of Hope reconciliation movement encourages respectful collaboration and focuses on creating space for respectful and meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to occur. **Reconciliation in Child Welfare: The Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth and Families** (Blackstock et al., 2006) is valuable in guiding processes for improved outcomes for Indigenous children and families. The Touchstones speak to the importance of acknowledging the mistakes of the past, and learning from them, setting a foundation for open communication and truth telling, working together respectfully for a new system, and addressing past harms and ensuring they are not repeated. The Touchstones model can help guide discussions in negotiating relationships for more Inuit control, input

and authority in child welfare, for collaborative development in child welfare legislation, policies and practices. The Touchstones' principles focus on self-determination, a holistic approach, culture and language, systemic interventions and non-discrimination.

Inuit families face high levels of poverty, poor housing, racism and violence that is the legacy of a long history of colonization, cultural disruption, and discrimination. The social and economic inequalities that exist and which result in poverty, food insecurity, inadequate housing, and lack of services and resources must be addressed in order to help Inuit children and youth get a better start in life. These gaps in services contribute to children being taken into care (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). Community and family investments are needed. Poverty is a contributing factor to child neglect. Providing funding and supports to parents and kinship care that is on par with funding and social supports for foster care could maintain children in their community (Rae, 2011). A holistic approach is recommended in the literature. Promising practices in early intervention, prevention and outreach services include family supports before there is a crisis, early childhood education programs, community family resource centres, Head Start and parenting programs, and family support/connections workers (Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, 2015; Rae, 2011; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018).

The report to Canada's Premiers in 2015, **Aboriginal Children in Care**, indicated that focusing on social determinants of health will promote the health and well-being of Indigenous children and communities. It stated that supports need to target social and economic factors affecting Indigenous people in order to reduce the number of children in care and improve outcomes. Some of the factors include food insecurity, housing, employment and income, mental and physical wellness, early childhood development and education, family violence prevention and access to language and culture. Programs and responses addressing these factors reduce family distress, support stronger and healthier communities, and help children by addressing their family's vulnerability.

The Inuit Children and Social Services Reference Group worked with the National Aboriginal Health Organization to highlight key child welfare, health and safety issues for Inuit (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2011).

They identified the importance of:

- ◆ Addressing child and family poverty
- ◆ Fostering more community involvement in supporting families and children
- ◆ Taking an Inuit-specific approach to child welfare
- ◆ Developing more culturally appropriate services
- ◆ Focusing on supporting families and preventing child welfare crisis
- ◆ Improving supports in the home
- ◆ Supporting traditional Inuit practices
- ◆ Ensuring Inuit have access to legal services
- ◆ Ensuring Inuit knowledge informs the practice in child welfare and family support
- ◆ Maintaining cultural ties and community connections for adopted children
- ◆ Involving families and communities in decision-making
- ◆ Building capacity in Inuit communities

A literature review prepared for the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre (OICC, 2015) also identified promising and recommended practices for Inuit children and youth. These practices focused on the importance of Inuit being in the best position to identify and understand their own needs. Inuit direction and control are seen as the best way to ensure Inuit values and traditions are incorporated into child welfare services (OICC, 2015; Rae, 2011). For better outcomes, they recommend practices which support Inuit community involvement, youth engagement, involvement of Elders, land-based activities, traditional practices and foods, and Inuit language and culture (OICC, 2015).

The importance of a strength and resilience based approach recurs consistently throughout the literature. Such an approach, focusing on current achievements and opportunities is built on strong beliefs in the value and capacity of Inuit. This approach involves helping parents, children, and youth identify what they do well and building on this rather than concentrating only on crisis, and individual and systemic deficits. In this approach it is important for child welfare systems to acknowledge they are not the experts in Inuit ways of knowing and doing. Instead they are a resource and support

where power can be shared, Inuit ways validated, and where dignity, trust and respect are promoted. Inuit Elders have identified traditional values as a good foundation for a strength and resilience-based approach. These values include patience, perseverance, love and caring among family and community members, communication, awareness of self and others, confidentiality and respect for others, and personal responsibility. (OICC, 2015).

This focus on resilience is also important in designing programs for children, youth and their families. Michael Ungar (2018) identifies components of effective resilience programs as those providing opportunities that help:

- ◆ Build relationships
- ◆ Encourage powerful identities
- ◆ Provide opportunities for power and control
- ◆ Promote social justice
- ◆ Improve access to basic material needs (like food, housing, and safety)
- ◆ Develop a sense of belonging, responsibility for others, spirituality, and life purpose
- ◆ Encourage a sense of culture and historical roots

All of these are essential to both improving resilience and delivering good programming for children who face significant challenges.

Libesman (2004) identified several themes in international research relevant to this Review. The findings indicate local solutions are important for Indigenous communities and need to be holistic to heal all sections of the community. Empowering communities with authority for children and families is important for long term effectiveness and well-being. Culturally competent child welfare services require Indigenous staff, and also importantly incorporate cultural knowledge into service delivery frameworks.

There has been significant international interest in alternative dispute resolution approaches such as family group conferencing, Aboriginal family decision-making, and

family circles. These approaches are used in Canada, for example at the Children's Aid Society in Ottawa. A similar approach, known as the Family Group Decision Making Project was piloted in three regions of Newfoundland and Labrador, including Nain in the 1990s. The Family Group Decision Making Project emphasized that the family group, made up of family, friends and other close supports were positioned to identify what steps were needed to stop maltreatment (Burford & Pennell, 2000).

The Council of Significant Individuals in Quebec is similar to Family Group Decision Making. This initiative has been adapted by including a community Elder, the child's extended family, and an Aboriginal caseworker. Cultural practices are integrated. When a child is removed from his or her family, the caseworker has two weeks to bring together a Council of Significant Individuals along with the parents and possibly the child. The goal is to establish a stable and appropriate living environment within the child's community as quickly as possible.

The Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society uses a family preservation and support approach to assist distressed families in order to prevent removal of children. The approach involves having a family preservation counsellor work with parents, other caregivers, children and youth to develop a plan that addresses child protection issues to prevent removal. The services are time limited. The principle behind this approach is to support families that do not meet the criteria of child maltreatment but are still considered at risk. Since Indigenous families suffer disproportionately from low income, poor housing, mental health and addictions issues, it is important to recognize that increasing supports to prevent maltreatment is an early outreach, preventative approach to child welfare.

Various programs and approaches throughout Canada offer practical examples for change. The Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society in Edmonton offers several child and youth programs that promote culture. It offers a program for 6 to 12 year olds where children can participate in activities, teachings, and ceremonies about their culture. Another program for pre-teens offers a buddy/mentoring program where they participate in cultural activities and learn about healthy lifestyle choices through traditional teachings and positive role models. Bent Arrow also offers monthly circles that are specifically designed for children and youth in care who want a cultural experience (Bent

Arrow, 2019). Ensuring cultural support for children's programs is important in instilling pride and building on their sense of strength and identity.

A comprehensive review of the child welfare system in Manitoba recommended a Live-In Family Enhancement (LIFE) program. In this program, parents, along with their children are fostered whereby supports and resources are available to a family on a twenty-four hour basis for an eight to twelve month period. An evaluation of this program has shown such benefits as stronger attachments between children and parents, improved parenting and household management skills, strengthened social support for parents, and improved trust in social workers. The costs involved in LIFE do not appear to exceed regular foster care expenses (Deane et al., 2018). This is a good example of practical supports for families.

An interesting approach has been developed in the Inuit village of Kangiqsualujjuaq. This small village had the highest number of children in foster care in Nunavik. Qarmaapik Family House was a former bed and breakfast and opened in 2016 for children who needed a safe place to stay if their parents were in crisis. It is fully staffed and offers programs such as cooking, parenting, counselling and emergency beds for children. The focus is to keep children safe in their community and help the parents. This work is in collaboration with Quebec's child protection authorities. Qarmaapik House is an example of Inuit creating change within their community when given the opportunity, support and resources (Emudluk, 2017).

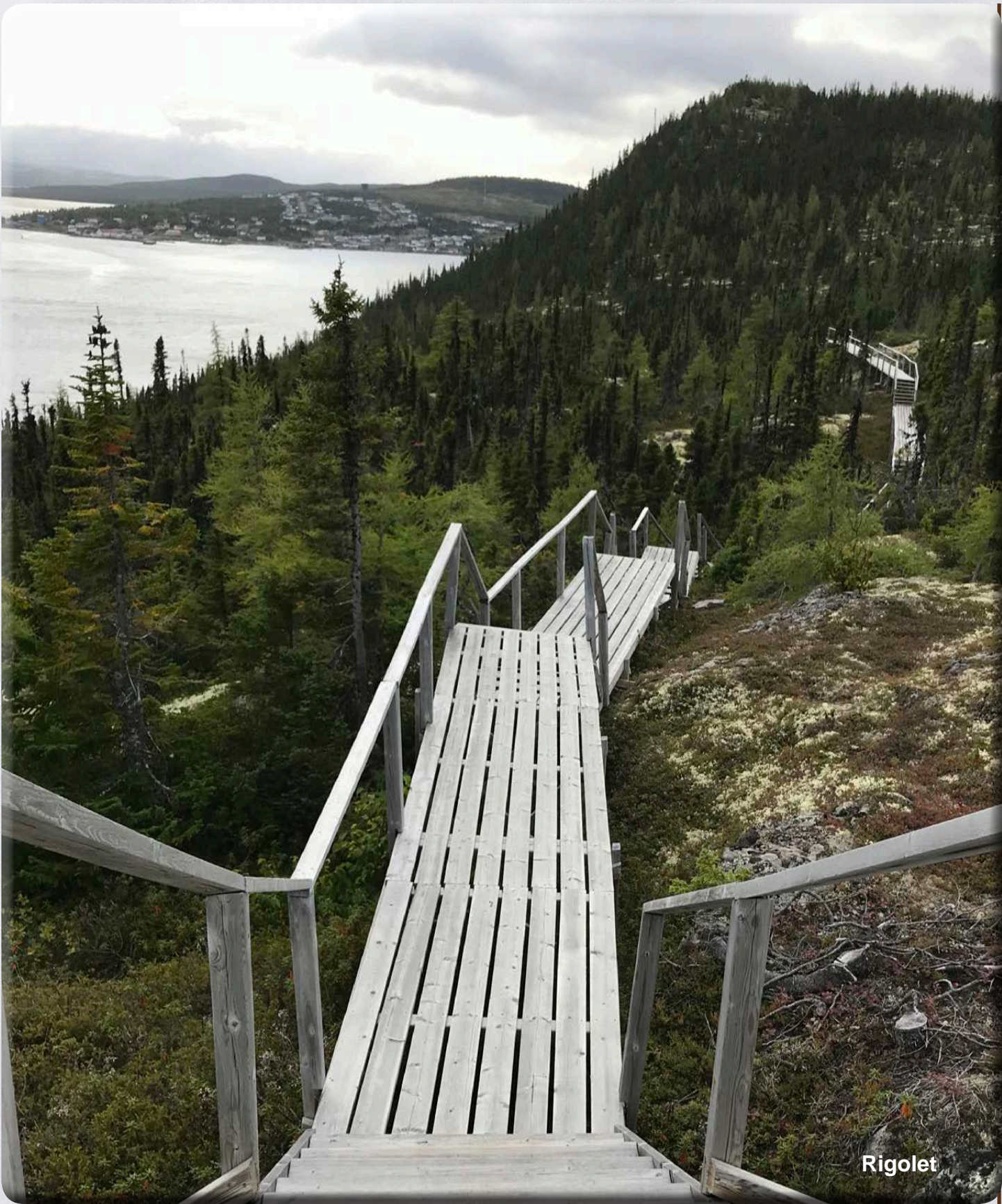
The literature strongly supports initiatives to build a skilled Inuit workforce. (CWLC, 2011; Rae, 2011, Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group, 2015; OICC, 2015). There is a consensus that having a qualified Inuit workforce is fundamental in providing services and programs for Inuit children and youth. Inuit staff are in a position to integrate and model cultural values, traditions, and community standards. It is important to recognize the value of their knowledge, and support their place in building community capacity.

Collaboration with Schools of Social Work has resulted in having Inuit qualified social workers introduced into the workforce. The recent experience between Memorial University of Newfoundland and Nunatsiavut Government partnering to develop and

deliver an Inuit Bachelor of Social Work Program provides lessons for such initiatives in the future. Nunatsiavut needed social workers in its communities and engaged with Memorial University to develop a culturally relevant BSW program which was grounded in Inuit-specific principles, beliefs and communication styles. Program modifications included admissions processes, course scheduling, Inuit-based course content, teaching methods and cultural orientation for teaching staff. The experience provided insights into the challenges of geography and the importance of staff continuity and corporate memory. Interestingly, Nunatsiavut did not view the university's lack of expertise in providing a professional social work program to Inuit students as a deterrent. Rather, Nunatsiavut saw this as creating a degree of cultural humility where the university recognized the expertise of Nunatsiavut in cultural matters. (Oliver, et. al., 2013). By 2013-2014, all 15 students graduated from the Inuit Bachelor of Social Work degree program. "The IBSW program has demonstrated that through collaboration, dedication, hard work, appropriate supports and sufficient funding, improving educational outcomes was achievable." (Graham, 2015).

Labrador relies on recruitment efforts that bring professionals from other parts of the province and beyond, many of whom are non-Indigenous. This is not unique to child protection positions. In *Attracting and Retaining Professionals in Labrador* (Mullings et al., 2018), the authors note that significant recruitment and retention issues continue to create challenges. They identify key recurring themes such as professional dissatisfaction in people's professional and personal lives in Labrador; the importance of staff orientation in the new workplace, community and culture; and challenges associated with building informed and sustained change through a broad commitment to strategic priorities. The report presents a series of recommendations which would contribute to a constructive dialogue in the current context.

This literature review provides clear evidence that there is an abundance of knowledge, directions, recommendations, calls to action and insights. They range from broad multi-year national processes to accounts of individual programs that are offered at the community level for small groups of Indigenous children. All are relevant in helping to inform a future plan that can be broad and comprehensive as well as meaningful to individual children and families.



Rigolet

7. Closing Thoughts

The level of interest and resolve to make changes in the child protection system to improve the experiences of Inuit children is quite remarkable. If the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador moves forward with a commitment to genuine and meaningful change with Inuit communities and governments, it will have no shortage of participants in that process. But Inuit will need to be engaged respectfully and as equals. The process must involve the shared development of a vision, and not merely sharing information once the core plan and goals have already been established. And if the Nunatsiavut Government decides it will move forward in establishing its own child welfare legislation and services, it will likely see even more people interested in being part of creating a new vision. Such a transition will need to be supported with appropriate resources in order to be successful.

This Independent Review into Inuit children's experiences in the child protection system is about children's rights. Every Canadian child deserves to have their rights protected so that they can live safely and have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Canada, with the support of all jurisdictions, ratified the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** in 1991. Newfoundland and Labrador, as a supporter to the Convention, has a duty to implement children's rights contained in it. For the purposes of this discussion, it is particularly relevant that the Convention also speaks to the importance of special protections and considerations for Indigenous children in Article 30.

This Independent Review demonstrates that there are concrete and meaningful actions that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador can take, many in partnership with Nunatsiavut Government, to advance the status of Inuit children's rights. And there is clearly an opportunity for Nunatsiavut Government to build its own capacity for assuming responsibility for child welfare services in the future. For every discussion and decision related to this report, there is an opportunity as well as an expectation to enhance Inuit child's rights and well-being. Inuit children are waiting. They have been waiting a very long time.



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8. Recommendations

The following recommendations follow naturally from the activities of this Review which included community input, file reviews and a literature review. Some of these recommendations speak to immediate changes the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development needs to make in the current system to better meet the needs of Inuit children today. These children cannot be ignored while longer term plans are made. Other recommendations will require the active partnership with Nunatsiavut Government. They will serve to build capacity within Nunatsiavut and will prepare it for transition when it decides it is ready to enact its own laws and programs for child protection.

Recommendation 1: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure Inuit values, knowledge, and cultural practices are integrated in all policies, planning and services for Inuit children and youth.

Recommendation 2: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development seek the input and perspectives of Inuit children and youth in all plans that affect them and in a manner that reflects their age and developmental level.

Recommendation 3: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development provide Inuit children and youth who are in care with information about their background, circumstances, and family in a manner that reflects their age and developmental level.

Recommendation 4: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure Inuit children and youth maintain relationships with important individuals in their lives, with special consideration for siblings whenever possible.

Recommendation 5: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador work with Indigenous governments and communities to establish and support activities and programs supporting Indigenous youth leadership opportunities and celebrating Indigenous youth role models.

Recommendation 6: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure traditional Inuit values and healing practices are integrated into services, program options, safety plans and intervention plans for children, youth and their families. Nunatsiavut Government must be invited and supported to actively participate.

Recommendation 7: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development complete an audit on all out-of-community placements, and engage Nunatsiavut Government to ensure all placement options have been considered first within the child's family and/or community, and secondly within Nunatsiavut territory.

Recommendation 8: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure all access visits are designed for the maximum benefit of the child, and that they take place in a child-friendly and culturally appropriate environment that promotes parent-child interaction.

Recommendation 9: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure appropriate transition planning for children who have been removed from their parents and community. This must include specific and structured steps when children are removed and returned. Nunatsiavut Government must be invited and supported to actively participate.

Recommendation 10: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development broaden its mandate and range of responses to focus more on prevention and early intervention for children and families in the child protection system, and support Inuit community services and programs that contribute to prevention and early intervention.

Recommendation 11: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development consistently develop cultural continuity plans for children and youth and ensure these plans are meaningful, authentic and are enhanced by Inuit community resources. Plans must include measurable steps ensuring the child or youth in care is provided with opportunities for Inuit cultural activities, ceremonies, celebrations, practices, lifestyle, family and community contacts.

Recommendation 12: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development consistently engage parents, family members and foster parents in meaningful collaboration for all planning related to their children and youth, and those in their care.

Recommendation 13: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development enhance recruitment and explore new models of foster care which could potentially include placing parents and children together.

Recommendation 14: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development develop and evaluate outcome goals for child protection services in partnership with Nunatsiavut Government.

Recommendation 15: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development review and revise the scope, mandate and physical environment of the alternate family care group home in Nain to ensure a quality and safe placement option for Inuit children and youth. Include consideration for a visitation centre, emergency placements, parent coaching centre, healing facility, and transition-to-home placement centre for children and parents.

Recommendation 16: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development establish a permanent Indigenous cultural component in the PRIDE training program for foster parents, and ensure the cultural components in the PRIDE training program are developed and delivered by Indigenous resource personnel.

Recommendation 17: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure timely and responsive delivery of PRIDE training program, at a minimum of once per year in Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 18: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development work to increase kinship care options and increase financial and social support for kinship caregivers.

Recommendation 19: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure professionals and caregivers working with traumatized children and families receive mandatory education in caring for traumatized children and youth.

Recommendation 20: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development review and update the current level of financial supports to Inuit children, families and caregivers in the child protection system to reflect the northern Labrador reality. This must include addressing prices of goods and services, as well as transportation and delivery costs.

Recommendation 21: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador vigorously adopt and observe Jordan's Principle for Indigenous children and youth, and work with the federal government to access available federal resources to help address needs.

Recommendation 22: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development provide enhanced authority to frontline staff to use professional discretion in day to day decision making, including financial decisions, on behalf of children and families.

Recommendation 23: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador develop and deliver mandatory Indigenous cultural education to public servants in a tiered approach with Level 1 being required for all public servants, and Level 2 reflecting more advanced content for those directly working with Indigenous communities or making decisions and policies related to Indigenous communities. Indigenous representatives should be engaged in content development and delivery.

Recommendation 24: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure training plans are in place for all social workers in Indigenous child protection settings and in addition to Recommendation 23, include community-based practical cultural learning experiences with community resources.

Recommendation 25: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure each office in each community is staffed and equipped to respond on a daily basis to inquiries, requests, and complaints.

Recommendation 26: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure that frontline social workers in Indigenous communities are supported with immediate access to quality clinical supervision and mentoring.

Recommendation 27: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development work with Nunatsiavut Government to recruit and educate Inuit staff to fill professional and paraprofessional roles with children, families, and communities.

Recommendation 28: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development develop a recruitment and retention strategy for remote Indigenous communities which includes best practices in innovative approaches to recruitment, with consideration for incentives including continuing education, travel allowance, housing support, remuneration, and staff wellness, and workplace practices reflecting Inuit knowledge and values.

Recommendation 29: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development actively engage frontline staff in Indigenous communities to develop and inform the recruitment and retention strategy in Recommendation 28, and to also inform the department on policies and practices in Indigenous communities, as well as a plan for employee self-care and well-being.

Recommendation 30: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador work with Nunatsiavut Government and other levels of government as necessary to address inadequate housing, food insecurity, and safe shelters for vulnerable Inuit children and their families.

Recommendation 31: Department of Justice and Public Safety engage justice system service providers to explore ways to improve access and timeliness of advice, services and decisions for family law matters in Labrador and ensure appropriate supports to implement the plan. This is particularly urgent where communities are served by circuit courts.

Recommendation 32: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, at Nunatsiavut Government's request, actively support enhanced Inuit community capacity in order to prepare for transition to Inuit responsibility for child welfare services.

Recommendation 33: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development monitor and evaluate the state of Indigenous children and youth involved in protection-related services in Newfoundland and Labrador, and report this annually to the Legislature.



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Nain

Appendix I: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for Review of Child Protection Services in Inuit Communities

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is an independent Statutory Office of the House of Assembly. The Office of the Child and Youth advocate has called this review at the request of Nunatsiavut Government. This independent review is being conducted under authority of s.15.(1) of *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.

Mandate:

To conduct a comprehensive Review of child protection services provided to Inuit children in Newfoundland and Labrador with a view to identifying deficiencies, exploring promising and best practices, and making recommendations for improved outcomes within an appropriate cultural framework.

Scope:

1. Inquire into why the child protection system is not producing favourable outcomes for Inuit children;
2. Review policies, case management practices, and administrative practices for delivering child protection services to Inuit children; this will include reviewing data relating to key decision points including referrals, investigations, plans, assessments, removals and placements;
3. Complete research into other Reviews, Inquiries and research findings on child protection experiences in Indigenous communities, including deficiencies, best practices and recommendations;
4. Engage Inuit communities including young people, elders, leaders, service providers, parents, extended families and foster parents to identify experiences with the child welfare system, and solicit ideas for change;
5. Make recommendations for improved child protection outcomes for Inuit children and youth within an appropriate cultural context;
6. Report back to communities on findings and recommendations at the conclusion of the Review.

Timeline:

This Review will be completed by March 31, 2019. A public report will be released.

Appendix II: Media Release

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

April 18, 2018

Child and Youth Advocate Announces Review of the Child Protection System's Response to Inuit Children

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is launching a comprehensive, independent Review of the treatment, experiences and outcomes of Inuit children and youth in the Newfoundland and Labrador child protection system. The Review will identify deficiencies, explore promising and best practices, and make recommendations for improved outcomes within an appropriate cultural context. The Nunatsiavut Government approached Child and Youth Advocate Jackie Lake Kavanagh to request her office conduct an independent Review.

The Review will look at a number of areas with respect to Inuit children receiving services from the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development including protective intervention, in care, foster care, youth services, and other alternate placements. The Review will provide an opportunity for Inuit communities to be directly involved in discussing these issues and identifying potential changes. Young people, elders, families, foster families, community leaders, extended family members, and service providers will be invited to share their experiences and their views for the future. Interpreting services will be provided when needed, and counselling and support services will also be available, given the sensitive nature of the discussions. Another component of the Review will include an extensive review of individual case files.

Indigenous children and youth are critically overrepresented in Canadian child welfare systems. The federal government recently stated that the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in child welfare systems has reached crisis proportions with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children making up more than half of Canadian children in foster care. Provincially, 345 (34%) of the 1005 children and youth in care in Newfoundland and Labrador are Indigenous. Almost half of these children are Inuit.

Since coming to the role in December 2016, Child and Youth Advocate Jackie Lake Kavanagh has publicly stated that services and approaches with Indigenous children and youth are a priority for her.

Quotes:

"I am extremely troubled about the poor outcomes for Indigenous children in the child protection system. This is a historical issue with its roots in colonial practices reflected in residential schools, generations of families with histories of trauma, and social inequality. The status quo is not acceptable and cannot continue for Inuit children and youth." Jackie Lake Kavanagh, Child and Youth Advocate

"Too many of our children have been taken away from their families, communities, culture and way of life. The lack of critical resources and supports that are available in other parts of the country has caused undue hardship and emotional stress for many of our people. We have to find a way to address this serious issue, so that those affected can find a way to lead healthy, productive lives." Johannes Lampe, President of Nunatsiavut

The Child and Youth Advocate wishes to recognize the Nunatsiavut Government's offer of assistance and support as she conducts this independent review. In addition to ongoing consultation as needed, this support will be valuable in coordinating logistics, communications and plans within Inuit communities, and engaging with these communities in ways that are

culturally respectful and appropriate.

Planning has commenced and the work will be concluded by March 31, 2019. A public report will be issued.

Terms of Reference for the Review are below.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate can be reached by calling (1-877) 753-3888, emailing office@ocya.nl.ca and on Twitter @OCYANL.

Media Contacts:

Wilma MacInnis
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
(709) 753-3888
wilmamacinnis@ocya.nl.ca

Bert Pomeroy
Director of Communications
Nunatsiavut Government
(709) 896-8582
bert.pomeroy@nunatsiavut.com

Appendix III: Community Invitation - English

INVITATION

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is completing an independent Review of the experiences of Inuit children and youth in the child protection system. We will explore a number of programs of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development where Inuit children receive services. Nunatsiavut Government has asked us for this review.

Participation

We hope you will consider participating. This Review will provide an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns, and to identify changes that will better serve Inuit children and youth. Young people, elders, families, foster families, community leaders, extended family members, and service providers are invited to share experiences, views, and ideas for the future. If you are considering participating in this Review, the following information will be helpful:

- Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time
- Your identity and information will be protected and respected at all times
- All participants in group discussions are expected to respect the confidentiality and privacy of others
- Sessions can be arranged for individuals, families, groups, and communities
- Sessions will be held in a community space with comfort and safety in mind
- You can ask a support person to attend meetings with you
- Interpreting services will be provided, if needed
- Follow up support will be available, if needed, to assist you after discussing these sensitive topics
- Sessions will be recorded to ensure accurate information is available when the final report is being prepared

- Any information you provide will be securely stored and used only for the purpose of this Review
- Findings and recommendations of this Review will be shared publicly

This Review will respect the importance and value of Inuit culture. The Review will be completed by March 31, 2019 and a public report will be released.

Community Visits

Community visits will occur in July and August to explain how the Review will work, how you can participate, answer your questions, and make introductions and connections in communities. Please see the schedule of communities and dates below. More community visits will occur in September and October where you will have opportunities to share your experiences, and your ideas for change. We will let you know when this schedule is finalized.

Hopedale – July 30 and 31
Postville – August 1 and 2
Makkovik – August 2 and 3
Rigolet – August 6 and 7
Nain – August 7 and 8
Happy Valley-Goose Bay – August 9 and 10

About the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

We are an independent office that represents the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth who are entitled to services and programs from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. We speak up for individual and groups of children and youth, we investigate complaints and concerns and review whether children's rights have been met.

Contacts

If you wish to speak with someone about this Review process please contact either:

Jackie Lake Kavanagh
Child and Youth Advocate
Office of Child & Youth Advocate
Tel: 709-753-3888
jackiekavanagh@ocya.nl.ca

Dr. Ken Barter
Review Consultant
Office of Child & Youth Advocate
Tel: 753-3888 / 709-685-4332
KenBarter@ocya.nl.ca

You can also reach the office toll free at 1-877-753-3888

Our community liaisons are Danielle Baikie at 922-2126 and Darlene Jacque at 896-4431.

Appendix IV: Community Invitation - Inuktitut

KaikKujjuk

Tâna suliaKapvinga Sugusinu amma Inosuttunut uKautjigijajet pijagelittut immigolingajumik Kimiggutaujumut atuttauKattajunut Inuit sugusinu amma inosuttunut iluani sugusinu paitsiutauKattajunut piusinginnik. Kimiggulangavugut sutaijajunik suliajijajunut iluani SuliaKapvimi Sugusinu, InutuKannut amma Inuligijinnut Pivalliatuligijinginnik imâk Inuit suguset pitâKattamata kiggatotinik. Nunatsiavut kavamanga apigisimajut tâpsumunga Kimiggugiamut.

IlauKataunnik

KanuttogutiKavugut ipvit isumâlotiKalangajutit ilauKataugiamut. Tâna Kimiggutaugasujuk sakKititsilangajuk pivitsanik uKâlautiKagiamut pitjutajunut amma isumâlotigijajunut, amma nalunaitsigiamut asiangutitaugiaKajunut piunitsamik kiggatusonguniagatta Inuit sugusinik amma inosuttunik. Nukatlet inuit, inutuKait, ilaget, tiguani tigusiKattajut ilaget, nunalimmi sivukkatet, ilagijaugiallatut, amma kiggatuKattajunut sakKititsiKattajunut KaikKujavut atuKatiKagiamut atusimajammik, takunnâjanginnik, amma isumatsasiuttaugajattunut ilinganiattumut sivunittinut. IsumatsasiugutiKaguvit ilauKataugiamut tâpsumunga Kimiggutaulangajumut, ukua Kaujigatsait ikajugajattut:

- IlauKataunnigijait ilonnâgut imminik pigumajait amma Kangatuinnak ilauKataugumaiguvit ilauKataugunnaigajakKutit
- Kinaummangâppit amma Kaujigatsagijatit paigijaulangavut amma sulijugijautsianginnalunillu
- Ilonnait ilauKataujut iluani katingaKatigejunut uKâlautiKajunut nigijugijavut sulijugijaugiamut siammatitaugiaKangitunut amma Kaujijaukujaungitunut asinginnut
- katimannet âkKisuttaugajattut taikkununga immigolingajunut, ilagenut, katingaKatigejunut amma nunalinnut
- katimannet sakKititaulangajut iluani nunalimmi initsagijajunut itlukkijâpvigijajunut amma kamatsiataujunut isumagijaullutik
- ApigigajakKutit ikajugajattumik inummik ilagigajattanik ilauKatautillutit

- Tusâjet kiggatotet sakKititaulangavut, atuttaugiaKappata
- Malittauullutik ikajotet atuinnaulangavut, atuttaugiaKappata, ilinnik ikajugiamut uKâlautiKasimagettillutit tâkkuninga atuttausagaisonut pitjutaujunut
- Katimannigijaujut nipiliuttaulangavut kamatsiagasuugiamut taimâtsiak Kaujigatsait tigujausonguniammata Kaujigatsanut atuinnautillugit Kangatuinnak pijagellagittausimajuk allaKutik atuinnautilippat
- Kanuittutuinnanik Kaujigatsanik sakKititsiguvit piulimajautsialangavut amma atuttaulutillu kisiani ilinganiattumut tâpsumunga Kimiggutaujunut
- Napvâtaujut amma pikKujaliat tâpsumunga Kimiggutaujumut atuKatigettaulangavuk kinakkutuinnanut

Tâna Kimiggutaujuk sulijugiKaniakKuk tâpsumunga ikKanattoninganik amma illigijaujunut Inuit ilikkusinginnik. Tâna Kimiggutaujuk pijagettaulangavuk Mertz 31, 2019-nami amma kinakkutuinnanut allaKutik nuititaullunillu.

Nunalinnut Niuggunet

Nunalinnut niuggunik sakKilâttuk Joli amma Augos-imi tukisititsigiugiamut Kanuk tâna Kimiggunik suliaKapiutluta kiggatuKattajumik pivitsanik, Kanuk ipvit ilauKataugajammangâppit, kiugiamut apitsotigijannik, amma takutitsigiamut amma ataKatiKagiamut nunalinnut. TakukKujauvutit pivitsaginiattanginnik nunalinnut amma ullusanginnut atânettumut. Nunalinnut niuggugiallâlammijut Septemberami amma Octoberami taipsumani pivitsaKalâkKutit atuKatiKagiamut atusimajannut, amma isumatsasiugutigijannut asiangutitsigiamut. KaujititaulâkKutit tâna pivitsait pijagettaulagisimalippat.

Hopedale – Joli 30 amma 31

KipukKak – Augos 1 amma 2

Makkovik – Augos 2 amma 3

Rigolet – Augos 6 amma 7

Nain – Augos 7 amma 8

Happy Valley-Goose Bay – Augos 9 amma 10

Pitjutigillugu tâna SuliaKapvik ilungajumut Sugusinut amma Inosuttunut UKautjigiajinnut

Immigolingajiuvgut suliaKapviutluta kiggatuKattajumik pivitsanik, Kanuttogutigijaujunut amma takunnausigijaujunut sugusinut amma inosuttunut kiggatuttaugiaKajunut amma suliansanut tâkkunangat kavamakkunit Newfoundland amma Labrador-imi. NilliatitsijiuKattavugut taikkununga immigolingajunut amma katingaKatigeKattajunut sugusinut amma inosuttunut, KaujisaKattavugut nâmmasingiutigijaujunut amma

isumalotigijajunut amma KimigguKattavugut taikkua suguset pivitsagijangit kamagijautsiagaluammangâmmik.

Kaujispviutausot

UKâlaKatiKagumaguvit kinatuinnamik pitjutigillugu tâpsuminga Kimiggautaugasuajumut piusitsanganik KaujispviKagajakKutit nalletuinnamik:

Jackie Lake Kavanagh
Child and Youth Advocate
Office of Child & Youth Advocate
Phonnik: 709-753-3888
jackiekavanagh@ocya.nl.ca

Dr. Ken Barter
Kimiggutet Kaujissettinga
Office of Child & Youth Advocate
Phonnik: 753-3888 / 709-685-4332
KenBarter@ocya.nl.ca

KaujispviKagajagivutit suliaKapvimut akiKangitukkut omunga 1-877-753-3888

Nunalittini apvitattinga ukuanguvut Danielle Baikie numaramut 922-2126 amma Darlene Jacque numaramut 896-4431.

Appendix V: Public Announcement - English

September 17, 2018

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate just completed visits to Hopedale, Makkovik, Nain, Rigolet, Postville and Happy Valley-Goose Bay to begin discussing the independent Review of the experiences of Inuit children and youth in the child protection system. As you know this Review is being completed at the request of the Nunatsiavut Government. The interest and participation in each community are greatly appreciated. A second round of community visits for further participation and discussion is now planned, including North West River, on the following dates:

North West River

September 24, 7pm Community Meeting at the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development Office

Happy Valley-Goose Bay

September 26, 7pm Community Meeting at the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development Regional Office, 218 Kelland Drive

Makkovik

October 3, 7pm Community Meeting at the Community Hall

Hopedale

October 9, 7pm Community Meeting at the Nunatsiavut Government Assembly Building

Nain

October 16, 7pm Community Meeting at the Nunatsiavut Government Building

Rigolet

October 23, 7pm Community Meeting at the Strathcona Building

Postville

October 24, 7pm Community Meeting at the Recreation Hall

Please join us in these discussions. It is important to hear your ideas and opinions on how best to provide child protection services in your communities. Interpreting services and counselling supports will also be available if you need them.

In addition to the community sessions/discussions, our Advocacy staff will also be available to privately discuss individual situations where you may need help advocating for a child/youth.

Please contact community liaisons Darlene Jacque 896-4431 or Danielle Baikie 922-2126 for more information, or you can reach the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate toll free at 1-877-753-3888.

Appendix VI: Public Announcement - Inuktitut

Septembara 17, 2018

Inunnut Tusagatsak

Tâanna suliaKapvik Sugusinit amma Inosuttunut UKautjigijajet pijagesimajut niuggugalannimik ukununga Hopedale, Makkovik. Nain, Rigolet, KipukKak amma Happy Valley-Goose Bay pigiasigiamut uKâlautiKatigennimik immigolingajumik Kimiggugiamut atuttauKattajunut Inuit sugusinginnut amma inosuttunginnut kamagijajunut sugusinit paigijauKattajunut. Kaujimagegatsi tâanna Kimiggutaujuk pijagettaugasujuk Kinugautiliusimmammata Nunatsiavut kavamakktut. Tâkkua KanuttogutiKasimajut amma ilauKatausimajut iluani tâkkunani atunik nunalinni niuggunik nakutsagijavuk. Kingullimi nunalinnut niuggunik amma uKâlautiKagiamut mâanna pannaigutuliulimmijut, amma ilautitsilangavuk North West River ukunani ulluni:

North West River

Septembara 24, 7pm Community Meeting at the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development Office

Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Septembara 26, 7pm Community Meeting at the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development Regional Office, 218 Kelland Drive

Makkovik

Octobera 3, 7pm Community Meeting at the Community Hall

Hopedale

Octobera 9, 7pm Community Meeting at the Nunatsiavut Government Assembly Building

Nain

Octobera 16, 7pm Community Meeting at the Nunatsiavut Government Building

Rigolet

Octobera 23, 7pm Community Meeting at the Strathcona Building

KipukKak

Octobera 24, 7pm Community Meeting at the Recreation Hall

KailaulâkKusi tâkkunani uKâlautigijaulâttunut. IkKanattumagiuvuk tusagiamut isumagijatsinik amma uKagumajatsinik Kanuk piunitsamik sakKititsigajammangâtta sugusinik paitsiutiKagiamut kiggatotinnik iluani nunagijatsini. UKâttet kiggatotet amma uKautjigijet atuinnauKattalangavut ikajuttaugiaKagutsi.

Ilagiallugu nunalinni katimannet/uKâlautigijaujut, UKautjigijivut suliaKatingit atuinnaulâgivot atunik nunalinni immigolingajumik uKâlagumagutsi ikajuttaugiaKagutsi uKautjigiattaugiamut sugusinut/inosuttunullu.

KaujitsigajakKusi nunalet apvitattinnik Darlene Jacque 896-4431 upvalu Danielle Baikie 922-2126 Kaujigiallagiamut, upvalu SuliaKapvitinnut Sugusinut amma Inosuttunut UKautjigijet akiKangitumut 1-877-753-3888.

Appendix VII: Council of Child and Youth Advocates Declaration of Reconciliation

The experience of the past is a lesson for the future. We have learned from the experiences of those who were sent to residential schools of the profound tragedy that resulted when the rights of children; their connection with family and community; and their traditions and culture were not respected. The federal government's residential school policy of forcibly removing all children from the home as young as four years old, until they were adolescents or in some cases never returned home, left a tangible emptiness; it is a forced exodus that seems unthinkable today. We have listened and we now know the truth. We know Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians were changed by residential schools.

As independent Child Advocates in each of our respective provinces and territories, we listen every day to the voices of Aboriginal children who suffer the intergenerational trauma of the residential schools system. We hear their voices.

The eleven members of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates share an unwavering belief in, and respect for, the rights of children and youth.

As enshrined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, all children have basic rights to health, safety, education and well-being. The family is recognized as a fundamental and natural environment for the growth and well-being of children. Children have the right to be heard.

In our work advocating for the rights of children and youth, we have special regard for the circumstances of Aboriginal children and youth who are among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of children in Canada.

Our pledge is to ensure that the rights of Aboriginal children and youth are kept at the forefront in our advocacy work.

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, in the spirit of active reconciliation, support The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work on residential schools. The members of the Council strive to be a voice for all children and youth, and as such we support the recommendations of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the implementation of the history of residential schools in the curriculum of all public schools. We call for this in memory of those children who have passed away, those who survived, those who are living through the legacy of the imposed trauma, and to improve all Canadians' understanding of the true history of our country.

Our Council of Advocates will continue to work towards the reconciliation initiated by The Truth and Reconciliation Commission process. We will be vigilant in ensuring that the rights of Aboriginal children are respected. We will continue to work to engage with Aboriginal children and youth.

The healing journey, and the path to reconciliation, includes the involvement of youth in defining their own future. This is a journey that must be taken by all Canadians. By appreciating the past and hearing and learning from and about each other, trust and respect can be built. We will work to support Aboriginal children and youth to speak out, have their voices heard, and have their best interests reflected in how our nation's future unfolds.

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates is an association of government-appointed children's advocates from the nine provinces and two territories of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Ontario, Québec, Saskatchewan, and Yukon. Advocates are independent officers of the legislatures in their respective jurisdictions.

Dated June 1, 2015

Appendix VIII: Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates Statement Regarding Indigenous Child Welfare

TORONTO (January 31, 2018) – Following last week’s emergency meeting on Indigenous child welfare in Ottawa, convened by Indigenous Services Minister Jane Philpott and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett, the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) has issued the following statement:

As independent child advocates from nine provinces and two territories, we are dedicated to promoting and fostering respect for the rights of all children and youth and, in particular, their fundamental rights to health, safety, education and well-being.

Federal Ministers and others have stated that the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in care in Canada has reached “crisis” proportions. We acknowledge that it presents a significant challenge for our country, compounded by the legacy of colonization, residential schools, racism and extreme poverty.

We recognize that addressing this over-representation is not the sole responsibility of the federal government or a single province, territory, Indigenous nation or organization. Finding solutions is a shared responsibility requiring comprehensive and coordinated attention and action across the country. It must involve community consultation and include the voices of children and youth who continue to be negatively impacted by these unresolved disparities.

In reply to the Ministers’ comments and the reasons for this meeting, we respond as privileged witnesses. In our jurisdictions, we hear daily from Indigenous children, youth and their families about their experiences in the child welfare system. We stand with children and youth, and hope that their voices are heard directly. As members of the CCCYA, we agree to the following:

1. We recognize that coordinated solutions with both immediate and long-term actions are required to improve the living conditions and well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth in Canada. We call for immediate and long-term action to address the social determinants of health for these children and youth, including adequate housing, elimination of poverty, improvements to infrastructure, and ensuring clean water and food security.

2. We are committed to a process for change that will support reconciliation.
3. We believe that the voices of children and youth are integral to any process designed to improve their lives.
4. We believe that Indigenous peoples have the inherent right to self-determination, including the right to care for their children
5. As the CCCYA expressed through our Declaration of Reconciliation at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's closing events in June 2015, we call for the implementation of the TRC's Calls to Action. We acknowledge the negative impact that colonization, residential schools, the '60s Scoop and the current child welfare system have had on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth.
6. We believe that the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* is the cornerstone of all children's rights and that its implementation must be informed by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

About the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates is an alliance of legislatively mandated advocates for the rights of children and youth. These advocates may operate under various titles (e.g. Advocate, Representative, Ombudsman, Commissioner), but all are official representatives in their particular provinces and territories. All CCCYA members are independent statutory officers who report directly to the Legislative Assembly of their respective jurisdictions. Each CCCYA member office is established by legislation to operate in a manner that is independent from government authority or control. Council includes members from the nine provinces and two territories of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Ontario, Québec, Saskatchewan, and Yukon.

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Media Contact

Jeff Rud

Executive Director Strategy and Communications

British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth

(250) 216-4725

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

193 LeMarchant Road, St. John's, NL A1C 2H5

Telephone: (709) 753-3888

Toll Free: 1-877-753-3888

Fax: (709) 753-3988

Email: Office@ocya.nl.ca

Twitter: [@OCYANL](https://twitter.com/OCYANL)

