

June 15, 2020

Statement of Concern

Unacceptable Delay in Establishing Inquiry for Innu Children in the Child Protection System

In early September of 2019, I travelled to Nain to release my report on the provincial government's child protection responses to Inuit children. The report contained 33 recommendations and was entitled **A Long Wait for Change**. The title was carefully chosen and reflected the extraordinary and unacceptable amount of time for changes to be made for these vulnerable children. In part, the report documented decades of work to identify issues and recommendations for Indigenous children and their families and communities, and which included various Inquiries, Commissions, legislation, and reviews. It is troubling that many of my findings were neither new nor unique to this province. However, it put many issues in one place, and in a local context.



And now here we are again. The Innu are still waiting three years after the provincial government made a commitment to establish a formal Inquiry into the treatment of Innu children in the same system. We know that some changes can be made immediately before the outcome of an Inquiry to make a difference in these children's lives. Innu leadership has been clear that it expects a public process to build fundamental systemic change for the future. The recent death of an Innu youth by suicide and while in care further underlines their sense of urgency to get this process moving. But it should not be a sense of urgency for just the Innu. It should trigger a sense of urgency in all of us. These are vulnerable young people who have been pushed to the margins for far too long and they need all of us to stand with them. The long wait for change continues. It has never been more important than now to move to collective action for Indigenous children and youth.


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