

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
June 22, 2017

The Child and Youth Advocate on Challenges Facing Young People in Indigenous Communities

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is very concerned about the challenges facing young people in Natuashish and other Indigenous communities as well. This concern is reinforced with the recent suicide deaths and injuries of children and youth in Natuashish. The root issues are complex and historical, but the need to act is immediate. There is strength and a deep sense of caring in Indigenous communities, and the Advocate experienced this first hand on a recent trip to Labrador.

Child and Youth Advocate, Jackie Lake Kavanagh, sees a real opportunity for change as the provincial government completes its review of the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* and is positioned to develop a new approach to providing child welfare and youth services in Indigenous communities in the province. It is vital that the communities are at the center of all planning. They must be heard in order to develop plans and solutions that make sense within their cultures and to address the historical roots of many of these issues.

Jackie Lake Kavanagh, Child and Youth Advocate, stated “My Office strongly encourages the Province to build new ways of supporting Indigenous communities to ensure sustainable and culturally responsive services that can grow and thrive within the communities. The active role of communities and their leadership is central to success. In many discussions with community members and leaders, I have heard clearly that necessary supports must also extend beyond child welfare approaches, and need to support broader community healing from histories of intergenerational trauma. Children do not exist in isolation, and they need to be able to rely on healthy families and healthy communities.”

The Advocate plans another visit to Labrador this Summer and will meet with young people, community leaders and agencies.

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