

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.

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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.