



Together We Raise Tomorrow.

Children's Charter

Summing Up: What We Heard From Aboriginal Partners

Overview

The creation of a Children's Charter for Alberta was outlined in the *Children First Act* (the Act) which supports the health, safety, education, security, and wellbeing of children in Alberta by enhancing legislation and policies that affect children and youth.

From June 19 to October 31, 2013, the *Together We Raise Tomorrow* unified engagement took place on the Children's Charter, Poverty Reduction Strategy and Early Childhood Development. Over 6,400 Albertans provided feedback through 302 community conversations, survey's and on-line participation.

The Children's Charter was drafted based on the feedback received from stakeholders during the engagement, a review of children's charters in other jurisdictions and information contained in the *Children First Act*.

In May 2014, the draft Children's Charter was posted to childcharter.alberta.ca for Albertans to comment. In addition, discussions with members from the following Aboriginal partners took place across the province.

- Métis Nation of Alberta
- Child and Family Services Trilateral Technical Working Group (representatives from Treaty 6, 7, and 8 organizations, Aboriginal Relations, Human Services, and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada)
- Treaty 7 Delegated First Nation Agency Directors and Band Designates
- Treaty 8 Elders in Fort McKay
- Little Red River Cree Nation Delegated First Nation Agency staff
- Human Services Elders' Wisdom Circle

Upon conclusion of the engagement, the notes from all conversations were reviewed and grouped into common themes.



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Common Themes

The following themes emerged from our conversations:

- **Importance of Language and Identity:** Participants identified the importance of children's right to language and cultural values/identity, with elders and community leaders as essential partners. Several participants recommended the Charter be translated into multiple languages for communities to display publicly as an awareness tool.
- **Role of Families and Communities:** Participants emphasized that caring for children in Aboriginal communities extends beyond parents and family and includes other families and community members. To reflect this, the Charter should validate the holistic role of families and communities in ensuring children's well-being beyond parental relationships.
- **Acknowledgement of Residential School Experience:** Participants noted that acknowledging the lasting impact of residential schools for First Nations communities was of paramount importance in promoting the well-being of Aboriginal children and communities. This acknowledgement is key to increasing awareness of the root causes of some of the current challenges and barriers experienced by Aboriginal people.
- **Respect for the Land and Indigenous Worldviews:** Conversations highlighted the importance of educating children on the significance of the land, especially from an indigenous perspective. Stakeholders also noted that the Charter should guide decision-making in a way that supports future generations of Alberta children and validates the importance of local community context.
- **Educational Inequities and Issues of Access:** Participants suggested a principle that focused on the quality/standard of education, noting that some First Nations children do not receive the same level of education as their non-Aboriginal peers. Participants also hoped that issues of "access" would be reflected in the Charter more broadly (i.e. access to the justice system, leisure activities like playgrounds, clean water and healthy/affordable food). This is particularly important for First Nations children in rural/remote communities in Alberta.



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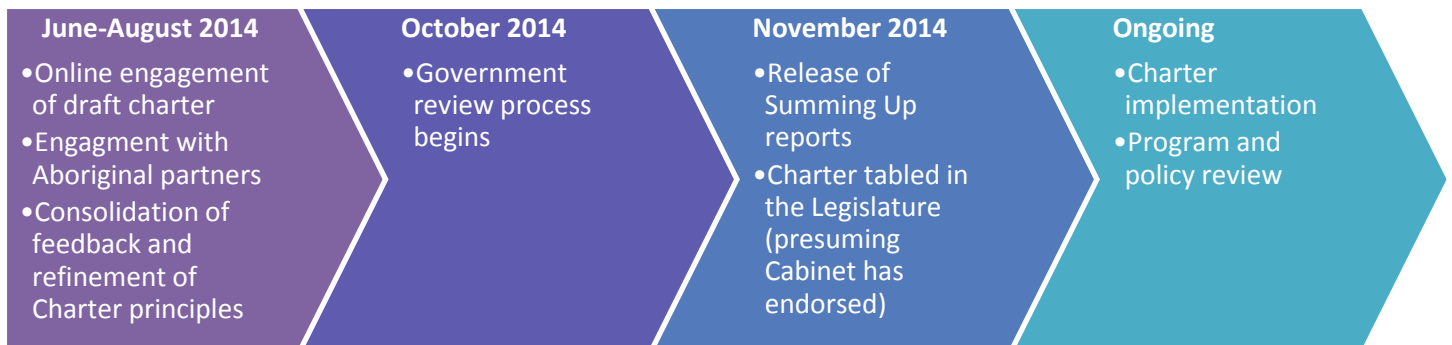
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Questions

Additional questions that were raised include:

- How will the Charter be monitored and enforced?
- Who are the partners in implementing the Charter? Will it be implemented government-wide and/or across levels of government?
- How have Charters in other jurisdictions supported or improved the conditions for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children?
- What linkages are possible with similar government commitments or initiatives?
- Will the Children's Charter support Aboriginal children and youth transitioning out of the care system?
- What role does the federal government play in upholding the principles identified in the Children's Charter, considering jurisdictional responsibilities to First Nation communities?

Timeline



Charter implementation plans will be further developed with consideration given to those questions raised by Aboriginal partners.

For updates and further information, please monitor our website at childcharter.ab.ca.