

# MINISTERIAL PANEL ON CHILD INTERVENTION MEETING SUMMARY

Monday, October 16, 9:00 – 11:30 am

The October 16 meeting of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention was held at the Capital View Room, 2nd Floor, Federal Building, 9820 – 107 Street NW, in Edmonton.

The Chair acknowledged those members of the public present and noted the meeting would be audio-streamed live on the Panel website, [childinterventionpanel.alberta.ca](http://childinterventionpanel.alberta.ca).

#### Panel Members Present:

Debbie Jabbour, Chair, MLA for Peace River

Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA for Lethbridge–East

Heather Sweet, MLA for Edmonton–Manning

Denise Woollard, MLA for Edmonton–Mill Creek

Lorne Dach, MLA for Edmonton–McClung

Dr. David Swann, Alberta Liberal caucus, MLA for Calgary–Mountain View

Jason Nixon, United Conservative Party caucus, MLA for Rimbey–Rocky Mountain House–Sundre

Ric McIver, United Conservative Party caucus, MLA for Calgary–Hays

Greg Clark, Alberta Party, MLA for Calgary–Elbow

Dr. Peter Choate, MSW, PhD, Mount Royal University

Bruce MacLaurin, MSW, University of Calgary

Dr. Patti LaBoucane–Benson, PhD, Native Counselling Services of Alberta

Tyler White, Siksika Health Services

## Introduction

Elder Gilman Cardinal opened the meeting with a prayer.

## Minister's Comments

Minister of Children's Services Danielle Larivee noted the Panel has been working to identify what is working, what is not, and to identify the root causes of child maltreatment. She said the impact of residential schools and intergenerational trauma has made an impression on her, and she believes that removing children from their families in many cases is not the right solution. There is an urgent need to address the funding disparity between on- and off-reserve services.

## Presentation

Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, on root causes and systemic issues creating inequalities of services for First Nations children and families

Dr. Blackstock focused her presentation on what we know, not what we don't. Reviewing the past 150 years of the child welfare and residential school systems, she provided numerous examples of studies and reports that acknowledged funding inequalities for services for Indigenous children. These reports and studies made recommendations to address these inequalities but government has not acted on them. Implementation is an ongoing issue. She asked the Panel to consider the following actions to fix the system for Indigenous children:

- Review why government and social workers do not do better when they know better. Why do so many recommendations go unimplemented? Avoid using official procedure to mask inaction.
- Change the definition of neglect to ensure it does not codify structural discrimination as parental deficit.
- Take any and all action to ensure full federal compliance with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT).
- Target the drivers of neglect and maltreatment – poverty, poor housing, mental health and trauma.
- Cost out all inequalities and work with First Nations to create comprehensive and public plans to address them in a timely manner. This must include deficits in publicly funded voluntary sector services.
- Adopt Jordan's Principle in Alberta using the CHRT definition and support First Nations' families in Alberta to get the help they need (in addition, make Jordan's Principle applicable to Inuit children, which currently it isn't).
- Take the position that First Nations are in the best position to care for their children.

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- Invest in early years programs that are culturally appropriate and include family support.
- Provide funding for family reunification and support services for 60s scoop children and children who have aged out of care today.

In responding to questions from the Panel, Dr. Blackstock suggested several programs/initiatives they may want to consider when making its recommendations:

- Consider expanding the jurisdiction of First Nations agencies to provide services off-reserve. Dr. Blackstock noted that there are more child apprehensions off-reserve than on, and the learnings of on-reserve agencies may be applied to off-reserve services.
- Consider the situation of the Mi'kmaq in New Brunswick. That First Nation had its funding increased 300 per cent over four years, and child welfare cases fell 40 per cent.
- There are programs in the United States that target housing and poverty as a means of addressing neglect; they have showed dramatic results.
- Thread the "Project of Heart" program into more education and awareness programs.

Dr. Blackstock also expressed a need for a longitudinal study that compares children at-risk who remained in the home with those who were placed in care. As well, there is a need to better evaluate child welfare initiatives to determine what really works.

## Next Steps

The next meeting will be a full day meeting on October 17 from 10:00am – 4:00pm on Bigstone Cree Nation. It will focus on remote and rural service delivery and Family Supports for Children with Disabilities. This will be the final meeting hosted by a First Nation.

The Panel website, [childinterventionpanel.alberta.ca](http://childinterventionpanel.alberta.ca), and e-mail, [CIPanel.submissions@gov.ab.ca](mailto:CIPanel.submissions@gov.ab.ca), continue to be available for the public to get information and/or make submissions.