

# Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children's Future

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**HONOURABLE YVONNE FRITZ**  
MINISTER, CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

Chairs, Delegated First Nation Agencies  
Co-Chairs, Child and Family Services Authorities  
First Nation Representatives

**Government House**  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Friday June 3, 2011

**Government  
of Alberta** ■



## Message From The Honourable Yvonne Fritz Minister, Children And Youth Services

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On Friday June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011, we held a significant third meeting of Delegated First Nation Agencies, Co-Chairs of Child and Family Services Authorities, and Representatives of First Nation organizations served by Child and Family Services Authorities. This gathering showed the positive results that can be achieved when we focus on keeping our children safe and connected to their families, community and culture.

The discussions surrounding the Review of Cultural Training, the Band Designate, Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention, and the Memorandum of Understanding showed a strong sense of purpose and commitment to work together to do the right thing for our Aboriginal children, youth and families.

You also discussed the critical need to continue these governance meetings. I support your efforts to do so because when you meet in person, it is easier to learn from one another and to find ways to bring about positive change more quickly on important issues.

The tremendous progress made, and the closer working relationships established between the DFNAs and the CFSAs will serve as the foundation to create the necessary changes for the well-being of our children, youth and families.

Within these pages are the excellent presentations and important discussions which occurred at the meeting. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services' commitments to you are also captured on these pages. This record of the day will serve as a reminder of what we said *we need* to do, what we said *we will* do, and what is possible if *we work together*.

Thank you for making this meeting a resounding success.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Yvonne Fritz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister  
Children and Youth Services

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## Executive Summary

The third *Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children's Future* on June 3, 2011 occurred almost one year after the historic inaugural gathering of Chairs of Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs), Representatives of First Nations served by Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs), and Co-Chairs of Child and Family Services Authorities. The first meeting on June 17, 2010 provided the impetus for action on several important topics: the role of the First Nations Designate, also referred to as the Band Designate; the review of cultural training within the Ministry; and a Memorandum of Understanding for services to Aboriginal children, youth and families in the Province of Alberta. At the *Gathering* on June 3, 2011, Chairs and Co-Chairs were provided an update on the significant progress made on these three initiatives.



Sharon Holtman, Lonnie Slezina, Chief Gayle Strikes With A Gun, and Karen English

Karen English, Director of Piikani Child and Family Services and Lonnie Slezina, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services Authority, described the process used by the DFNA directors, the CFSA CEOs and Ministry staff to arrive at a common understanding of the role, responsibilities, and qualification and skills required of the Band Designate. The response from the Chairs and Co-Chairs indicated that the Band Designate's role, responsibilities and qualification, as presented by Karen English and Lonnie Slezina, were aligned with what participants believe is important. The presenters

indicated that there are several steps to be taken prior to finalizing and receiving province-wide endorsement on the Band Designate's role, responsibilities and qualification. One of the critical steps in the process is to meet with Chief and Councils and *all* Band Designates.

The presentation on the Review of Cultural Training by Fred Anderson and Joey Hamelin of Children and Youth Services' Aboriginal Initiatives Branch, included the recommendations made by the consultants, Broadview Applied Research Group. Key to the recommendations was a different approach to the development and delivery of cross-cultural training that embodies meaningful involvement of local community members. Although the training will incorporate the history and traditions of Aboriginal people, the emphasis will be on experiential learning and an approach that focuses on developing cultural competency.

One of the recommendations, "develop a cultural policy framework," was the subject of some discussion. The concern was that this would be another policy that would be foisted on Aboriginal people. However, as explained by the Deputy Minister, the intent of the Cultural Policy Framework is to ensure that cultural sensitivity is "infused in everything we do." Subsequent to the meeting, the word "policy" was removed to ensure it does not create further misunderstanding.

An update on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for services to Aboriginal children, youth and families in the Province of Alberta was presented by Catherine Penington from Talking Stick Consulting Group. She informed the Chairs and Co-Chairs that a formal bilateral Concept Document, which is intended to confirm the commitment of the Government of Alberta and Alberta First Nations to work together, has been shared with the Grand Chiefs. The Concept Document will be reviewed at the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs on June 9, 2011. The Government of Canada has accepted the Minister's invitation to join the process, and a bilateral letter of intent will be forwarded to the



federal government in the near future. The community engagement process is expected to begin by fall 2011, followed by a Declaration of Intent leading to the development of the MOU.

In addition to the three projects, Cathy Claughton and Sangeeta Sicking from the Human Resources Department provided an overview of the Ministry's Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention project. They described the process that they have chosen to use to pursue the best practice by engaging a wide range of participants and stakeholders as a Community of Practice approach. The Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention project is intended to ensure "collaborative strategies will be developed to shift workplace attitudes and relationships, and deepen cultural understanding of Aboriginal peoples, resulting in our ability to attract and retain Aboriginal employees at all levels in the organization." As explained by Cathy Claughton and Sangeeta Sicking, increasing "Aboriginal workers at all levels in the organization will ensure there are more culturally appropriate services provided to Aboriginal children, youth, and families, thereby improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families." Just as the recommendations from the Cultural Review are intended to foster cultural competence in the Ministry, the recommendations from the Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention initiative are also focused on fostering transformational change by engendering cultural competence within Children and Youth Services.

The need for transformational changes in Children and Youth Services was addressed at each of the governance meetings. Time and time again, people said that unless relationships change – the relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, the relationships between DFNA staff and CFSA staff, the relationships between Ministry staff and DFNAs – nothing will change.

This need for change was highlighted again in Dr. Nico Trocmé's presentation, which focused on a study

he and his colleagues had conducted in 2008 on child abuse and neglect. The study described children, youth and families coming into contact with the child welfare system. Dr. Trocmé provided an overview of the results of the study and pointed out the implications for child welfare practice and policy. He urged people to broaden their thinking about children in the system and stressed "the importance of not simply thinking about our children in terms of words like abuse" but to consider "the much broader range of emotional and developmental needs facing these children and their families." He stressed the need to "disentangle urgent protection from chronic needs" and to develop "differential response and alternate response models."

However, as Dr. Trocmé said, "Abuse speaks to people more." He pointed out that people "understand our children primarily around the language of safety, primarily around language of physical harm, when the vast majority of children we're working with are children who are coming into contact with the child welfare system because of problems around their development, their well-being, their spiritual development, not just physical violence." He acknowledged that it is difficult to get people to "focus on neglect" and to understand that neglect "can be really bad, worse than abuse sometimes, and in some ways." Dr. Trocmé highlighted the need to transform the child welfare system so that it is able to respond to urgent situations but, at the same time, deal with "chronic, difficult family situations where it's not a quick response that's needed, but it's a very solid, long-term response."

The theme of change was echoed in the luncheon address given by the Honourable Verlyn Olson, Minister of Justice and Attorney General. He spoke of the Safe Communities initiative, which not only signifies a change in how government ministries work together, but also in the approach taken. Minister Olson noted that although the Justice Department is the lead ministry, "there are eight other government departments that are involved in this initiative." The

## Executive Summary

Crime Prevention Framework, he said, represents “a significant shift in government policy.” It incorporates a partnership approach, which reflects the view that “Everybody has a role to play whether it’s individuals, communities, various levels of government, non-profit organizations, businesses.” Minister Olson indicated the importance of empowering “local groups, the people who are working at the grassroots, to play a major role in early intervention, prevention, and creating safe communities.”

The theme of working together and involving the local communities was reiterated throughout the day. The general sentiment was that the “one size fits all” approach does not work, whether it is creating safe communities, responding to child welfare issues or developing cultural training.

The participants of the third *Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children's Future* considered the gathering to be a success. Approximately 95 per cent of the participants who responded to the survey said the gathering was very good to excellent and there was strong support for continuing these governance meetings in spite of anticipated changes in the provincial leadership and Cabinet responsibilities. Participants acknowledged the importance of “keeping the momentum going” and said that much has been accomplished since the Minister held the inaugural gathering in June 2010. They noted that the Minister’s leadership engendered a renewed sense of hope and optimism for “promoting understanding and trust” and fostering better working relationships between DFNAs, CFSAs and First Nations served by CFSAs.

## Next Steps

Following the presentations on the Role of the Band Designate, the Review of Cultural Training, the Memorandum of Understanding and the discussion on future governance meetings, the Ministry has committed to the following:

### 1 Role of the Band Designate:

- (a) Finalize with Chief and councils and all Band Designates, the role, responsibilities, and qualifications of the Band Designate.

**Timeframe: By the end of December 2011**

- (b) Develop the required training for Band Designates and others. This training will dovetail with the cultural competency training and will be developed after the Band Designate role, responsibilities and qualifications have been finalized.

**Timeframe: By September 2012**

- (c) Develop materials to be used for training and dissemination to parents and children.

**Timeframe: By December 2012**

- (d) Develop a strategy for delivery of training - to be determined in collaboration with Directors of DFNAs and CEOs of CFSAs.

- (e) Roll out of training to Band Designates and all agency staff.

**Timeframe: By December 2012**

### 2 Cultural Competency Training

- Develop a detailed implementation plan that would address short and longer term strategies including resources.

Phase I:

- (a) Develop a cultural framework that:

- Outlines the vision.
- Guides the development of standards, child intervention policies and programs, and evaluation processes.

- (b) Design and develop the cultural competency program:

- Ensure program delivery is aligned with principles and practices of adult education.
- Engage DFNAs, CFSAs, Métis staff to help coordinate local participation and to participate in program development.

**Note:** Throughout the process, ensure meaningful engagement of all stakeholders.

**Timeframe: By December 2012**

Phase 2 will begin after the completion of Phase 1.

### 3 Memorandum of Understanding

- (a) Approval and signing of the Concept Document between Treaty 6, 7 & 8 and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and Aboriginal Affairs.

**Timeframe: By August 2011**

- (b) Declaration of Intent

**Timeframe: By September 2011**

- (c) Community Engagement

**Timeframe: By November 2011**

### 4 Future Governance Meetings

- (a) Determine, in conjunction with the Planning Committee:

- The timing of meetings and attendees; and
- The number of meetings and the process for organizing and facilitating the meetings.

**Timeframe: By October 2011**

*(Note: Speakers are quoted verbatim except for edits that were made to enhance coherence. Sometimes it was not possible to hear clearly what was being said due to ambient noises. Those parts, therefore, could not be transcribed.)*

## Opening Prayer Introduction: Elder Eva Cardinal

... my people's culture has entered in government rooms and the people that work in there have opened their minds and their hearts to understand and respect our culture and our spirituality.

I am so pleased that we could all make today. I would especially like to invite you to pray along with me in the language that you are best able to. I am from the Cree Tribe and I say my prayer in my language. I really believe ... I know that our Maker understands and hears all language, so I invite you to pray along with me.

I am learning a lot in these gatherings. I realize my people's culture has entered in government rooms and the people that work in there have opened their minds and their hearts to understand and respect our culture and our spirituality. *Hai! Hai!*



## Introduction : Steve MacDonald, Deputy Minister, Children and Youth Services

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**T**hank you again, Elder Cardinal, for those powerful words. It's a pleasure to be with you again, having your wisdom at this table.

Good morning, everyone. It really is an honour to again chair this gathering. When we met in November of last year there was a strong energy and commitment on the part of everyone to explore new ways of working together. Today is another opportunity to strengthen our partnership and discuss the challenges we face. More importantly, it's an opportunity to celebrate the progress we've made since that very first historic meeting in June of last year. We really have learned from each other but, more importantly, we've listened to each other. We've collaborated together and developed stronger relationships, and we are moving in a direction that will make a real difference in the lives of children, youth and families.

We owe much of our success to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Yvonne Fritz. From the very beginning, Minister has been a driving force behind our efforts to enhance supports and services for Aboriginal children. She recognized very early on the importance of bringing this group together, a meeting that had never happened before, so we could share ideas, reach a common understanding and build momentum for positive and meaningful change. She is very committed to ensuring the Aboriginal community is actively involved in identifying opportunities and developing solutions for the challenges we face. Through her leadership, we are making progress. We are making things happen.

Minister Fritz has demonstrated time and again that she is a tireless and compassionate advocate for families and communities. It gives me great pleasure to turn to her for opening remarks. Thank you, Minister.

## Opening Remarks: Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister

**T**hank you, Steve. I appreciate your words very much. Once again, Elder Cardinal, thank you for your opening prayer ... very spiritual, lots of wisdom there for us. We also have another Elder who is here with us today that I would like to recognize, Elder Albert Blackwater. Elder Blackwater, I know you'll be saying our luncheon prayer and our closing prayer. You are both the heart and souls of the community, so thank you both for joining us today.

We also have some very, very special people with us and I'd like to ask the Chiefs that I name to please stand so that we can recognize you. We have Chief James Ahnassay. Please stay standing, Chief. We also have Chief Badger right beside him; Chief Rose Laboucan there as well; and we have Chief Paul; Chief Gayle Strikes With A Gun, our first female Chief of Piikani; also Chief Ernest Wesley is here. I'd ask that we all give our Chiefs a big hand and thank you. I know that we'll have other Chiefs join us and we'll introduce them as they do come into our circle and are with us.

We have three new Co-Chairs as well this morning: Pat Cochrane who is Chair of the Calgary Public School Board as well and a very dedicated Child and Family Services Authority Chair in Calgary. Pat, I'm going to have you rise as well. We have Julia Cardinal with us too. There's Julia. Hi, Julia. Thank you. And also Cathy Cooper ... Cathy, thank you. So we're going to give you a big hand.

And somebody else I have real pleasure in welcoming this morning is Del Graff, our newly appointed Child and Youth Advocate. And, Del, if you don't mind standing ... thank you. For those that may not know Del quite as well, you will get to know him over the years ... Del, because you'll be here a while. But Del does have twenty-nine years of experience in supporting children, youth and families both in Alberta and in British Columbia. And I know his insight and compassion, and his commitment. Steve and I both had an opportunity to spend time with Del ... and

we're just so pleased that you accepted the position here in Alberta. So thank you. We are looking forward to working with you and we're wishing you well in your new position too.

So here we are together, once again, at our third gathering at Government House and we're continuing to strengthen our relationships. We're going to share our ideas and we're going to really create what we hope is a long-term vision, a good vision, of how to better support our families in your communities.

What I have found over the past year is that we're listening and we're learning from one another and that we're continuing to discover how to bring about positive change more quickly when we gather in one place to discuss important issues. You discuss them when you're actually looking each other in the eye. You're listening to what's being said, and you're taking that holistic experience and you're going to take it back for policies, for procedures, and to help us with our legislation. That's what this is all about. It's about that commitment and it's about the growing conversations that you have out in the community that aren't occurring just here in this room. We've had people from Delegated First Nation Agencies. We've had people from our Child and Family Services Authorities and from our First Nations, and also our staff and in our department and our community leaders overall.



Del Graff

... we're listening and we're learning from one another and we're continuing to discover how to bring about positive change more quickly when we gather in one place to discuss important issues.

I think that by cooperating, by taking action that we talk about ... every time we take an action you know that there's a reaction and another action, another reaction, and that's what learning is about as we come to some positive solutions together. It is about inclusion. It is about collaboration but most importantly, it is about meaningful involvement. We say that happens when we have our one-on-one conversations. As the year has gone by, I've learned that that's very true; that that is beginning to happen in every community. My Deputy Minister has assured me of that as well.

So now that you have a far more detailed picture of what's been accomplished since our first gathering last June, Karen English, the Director of the Piikani Child and Family Services and Lonnie Slezina, CEO of our Region 1 Child and Family Services Authority, are going to present the excellent work that has been completed by the DFNAs and our CFSAs, that's been accomplished together. They're going to help ensure ... and I'm so pleased about this ... they're going to help ensure that the role of the Band Designate ... this is critical ... that that role is clearly understood.

We had that discussion at the last meeting. We had to move forward. I'm glad you're here today to bring this forward because when you explain about the Band Designate, you're going to be explaining about how they're going to be engaged in case planning for our children and youth, because that was the part of the

discussion ... so that the children and youth do not lose connection with their families, their community, and their culture.

But also I understand that there's going to be discussion about the work completed on the Cultural Training Review, which is critical as well. And our Director of Aboriginal Initiatives, we have Fred Anderson ... Fred ... let's give Fred a big hand. We have Joey. Are you here? Oh, there you are. Joey, thank you. They're going to talk about the Review's recommendations to you, and present that. They're going to seek to enhance the efforts that promote greater cross-cultural understanding. And it goes beyond just learning ... we've talked about that here in this room ... it goes beyond just learning about the history of Aboriginal people, and beyond just the ceremonies and traditions. It's more about the deeper understanding, and the competencies, so that we can provide support to our families in a culturally appropriate manner. We must do that.

And the latest developments on the Memorandum of Understanding, which sits in my heart, and in many of your hearts as well, the development of that Memorandum of Understanding ... that also will be reviewed. It's an agreement that we know has an extremely important role, clarifying and strengthening our ongoing partnership.

Chief Paul, thank you so much for your kind invitation that you gave to me here in this very room with our Premier, our Grand Chiefs, presenting Chiefs that were here as well ... that you extended to myself and to Minister Webber to join you next week on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June at the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs. I appreciate that. I'm hoping that we will have a better look at our Concept Document, our engagement letter. You know, Chief, you've been here for us at every meeting, and you've taken this, and you've moved it forward for me, and I appreciate that, and we're going to say thank you to you for that.

## Opening Remarks

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I think it's important that we started off with the idea of being open. We continued with this in our meetings that we've had, remaining transparent. We remain accountable. I've had people say to me, "Please don't stop this practice." I can assure you through my Deputy Minister that we will not stop this practice. But because of that accountability and transparency, to keep the practice ... that we record what is said in this meeting here because once you've recorded what has been said, that's how you continue to move on, and you hold it carefully as you move on. The language, and the way that it's said ... the meaning of what's being presented ... so your thoughts, concerns, your hopes that you voice at each meeting ... those records are going to be kept, and that is going to be continued ... because we've said what we need to do. We've said what we will do. We've said what was possible by all of us working together, and we've reflected the commitments that we're making, and the actions that we're taking ... because we are taking action.

And I can also tell you the actions that we're taking ... that I discussed those in the Caucus meetings I'm in, and at the Cabinet meetings I'm in. I take your voices to those tables. This room is exactly as I told you before. This is where our Caucus meets. We have a meeting here next week, a full Caucus meeting ... all day meeting. We gather just as we are gathered here, and this is where we share at the table, the Caucus table, about what the priorities are in our Ministry, and what we're moving forward with, so the written word does help me with that.

I've even taken that document and distributed it to every member of Caucus. You'd be surprised at the questions that I receive later about what it is that you're discussing, and why, and what it means for members that are interested, depending on what the issue is for them, especially some of the ministers.

I know that there are many changes in our political arena here in Alberta. As we move forward, there's a leadership change that's going to take place. The very

first vote on the leadership is in approximately 16 weeks ... on September 17<sup>th</sup>. And then they're expecting that there will be a second vote on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

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I've been assured that they will continue the good work you're doing because they believe that it's the right thing to do, and that you're making the right decisions to better support our families, our children, and our youth in our communities.

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Our Premier did put forward his resignation letter this past week to our Progressive Conservative Party to let them know that October 1<sup>st</sup> would be his last day as the Premier, and that he would be stepping down at that time.

A new Premier will be selected. We do not know if that will be in the fall, or if it will be in the spring. The reason why I say that is some people who are running are not MLAs currently, which means that they need to run as an MLA in a seat when someone steps down. That alone is quite a process, and then you're into Christmas; then you're into the spring. But if the person who does win the leadership ... if they're already elected as an MLA ... the leadership may happen on October 1<sup>st</sup>. It will be finished.

So there's lots of change on the horizon, but even with that excitement ... there's lots of excitement ... there comes uncertainty, and that's why I'm talking about it here today. I want you to know that I've been assured by my Deputy Minister, by our staff, we have Mark Hattori here, Mark is an Assistant Deputy Minister, and Fred, and many others who you all know, have worked very hard, as well. I've been assured that they will continue the good work you're doing because they believe that it's the right thing to do, and that you're making the



## Opening Remarks

right decisions to better support our families, our children, and our youth in our communities. So there is strong commitment to continue what we are doing ... that will continue.

Now, on specific initiatives that we have ... and I want to also bring you up-to-date on the Assistant Deputy Minister position, on what status that is at. You know we advertised for the position. We didn't hire through that advertisement. We've now placed an advertisement out on a national basis. We're expecting to fill that position within the next four to six weeks, and we'll let you know as soon as that position is filled. It's critical that we have that position. It's critical that it be filled with somebody who reflects very much what our interests are here at this table and in our Children and Youth Services Ministry overall, for our Aboriginal children and youth.

The other thing I wanted to say to you is this, and I think this is important. We have people that have worked very hard to help us put these meetings together. This morning it's important that we recognize them. I'm going to read out their names before I make closing remarks, and I'd like you each to stand as I do that.

But before I do that, I have also a special thank you for another Chief here who is a Grand Chief who really has been very, very, very helpful to us, and just really helpful to me. You've always been there, Chief, when I have called, or when I've needed help, and you've let me come to meetings at the last minute. You've done very much for me, and I'd like to welcome Grand Chief Arthur Noskey. If you'd please stand.

And so now for our organizing committee ... we have Sarah Potts. Sarah, where are you sitting? Just stay standing, Sarah. And we have Louise Charach. Thank you, Louise. Sharon Anderson ... Sharon, where are you? Sharon, thank you. And Joanna Gladue ... thank you, Joanna. Marcel Weasel Head ... Marcel, it's good you're here. And we also have Theresa Bull. Theresa, thank you. I'd like to just thank you all for being our organizing committee.

We have other members of the Ministry who also provided support that I'd like to recognize. We have Mike Norris ... a very smart, special guy ... it's good to have you here, Mike. Stay standing. We have Fred Anderson, who we all love. Fred? Please stand as well. Mary Jane Graham. She's not here but we'll keep her in our hearts because Mary Jane's very important, as well. Bev Sawicki, I saw Bev; and all of the staff. Let's give them a big hand as well.



Hon. Verlyn Olson, Elder Eva Cardinal, Hon. Yvonne Fritz and Elder Albert Black Water

I'm going to now introduce to you our guest speaker that we have who'll be presenting to you after my closing remarks. We're looking forward to hearing from our guest speaker and that is Dr. Nico Trocmé. Nico was one of the Co-Chairs of the Child Intervention System Review Panel. Dr. Trocmé had a very close look at what is happening here in Alberta. I did appreciate your thoughtful approach to the examination of what we are doing here in Alberta, Nico. I really enjoyed the meeting that we had together where I learned about not just your experience and your wisdom but your true commitment to children and youth and the help you gave to us here in Alberta to move forward. Your recommendations certainly made a huge difference, which is why I know people are looking forward to hearing any other ideas that you might like to bring to the table, and learning firsthand about the Child Intervention System Review Report. I ask that you

## Opening Remarks

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hold time for questions for people if you don't mind. I've learned that people have a lot of questions, and so that would be good.

In closing, I want to acknowledge Aboriginal Day, which is, as you know, on June 21<sup>st</sup>. I can tell you that I'll be reflecting on my special opportunity of being a part of our Children and Youth Services. This is a great Ministry. As you know too, today may be my last meeting with you as a Minister because when change takes place in the fall, I would expect that there will be less government ministries and, of course, there will be new people at the table. I know I shared this with you a year ago, but I feel blessed to be here with you. Thank you. You're extraordinary leaders. You're passionate. You're dedicated. You've taught me well. I can carry it with me.

I can tell you ... I am running again as an MLA. I was actually the first nominated in the Province of Alberta. I will carry what I have learned with you wherever I am. It doesn't matter where it is in government, but I'll carry it back into this room. You may encounter many

challenges as you move forward and you need people that learn together to walk with you and make sure that you're heard. I will do that because we are moving in the right direction. So thank you all.

I'm also going to ask that we recognize our consultant ... she's an outstanding lady, Jennifer Yip Choy ... for all her assistance in planning our events that we've had. Jennifer, we appreciate everything you've done. You care so deeply ... each word that you write in those reports ... I know that you do ... and also in everything that's presented here. Many of the issues have come together because of the good work that you've done with my Deputy Minister and with our Assistant Deputy Ministers and people involved in the department overall, Fred Anderson and staff. So please rise and we'll give you a big hand as well.

So having said all of that, I know that we were a wee bit late starting. We have time for a few questions. Are there any questions at all that you would have for me this morning?

## Questions to the Minister

### Allan Paul, Chief of Alexander First Nation

I just want to say we have to maintain a process for First Nations and DFNAs. There has to be a connection with the federal government, the Province and First Nations. I know it's outside the scope of the mandate but they have to be involved as well. We have to ensure that the leadership is involved and First Nations. Another thing I want to say is we have to look at a process for tracking kids that are in care. There's a model in BC and I'd certainly like to be involved in developing a process for tracking those kids in care.

### Response: Honourable Yvonne Fritz

Thank you very much, Chief. I think that what you've brought forward is the first time we've heard about the tracking of our young people and our children. I think that's important as well, especially because even in the world today ... people are very mobile and ... especially in the areas that we're interested in ... so that's important. And also about our non-delegated First Nations. I'm expecting that in the future there may be more and I don't know what that will look like, but I think that you have the vision as well. We will hold that close, and evaluate it, and see that we're doing the right thing at the right time as it moves forward. Thank you for that.

Are there any other questions? Chief Rose?

### Rose Laboucan, Chief of Driftpile First Nation

I have a couple of comments to make. First of all, I'd like to thank you again for hosting and having us here today. It's always so relaxing to come into this room.

I want to thank Elder Cardinal for her prayer this morning. Elder Cardinal said something very profound. She said, "Our culture and spirituality has entered into government places with acceptance." That was really very thoughtful in the way you put that because,

Minister Fritz, I think that's a lesson in itself ... the comment that she made. I've told you time and time again, we want to work with you. We don't expect this government to work for us anymore. We want to work in collaboration in order to bring about this change.



Chief Allan Paul and Loiselle Arcand with Hon. Yvonne Fritz

I really put a lot of thought into how I might put this without offending anybody, but we no longer want a paternalistic relationship with either the provincial government or the federal government. And we need to address some kind of plan in order to have an outcome in that process, where the Chiefs are respected, and communicated with, with the full intent to bring about what we need to do for our children.

I was really saddened ... we had the Archbishop visit our community, and many Elders were there. And you all know that our people have gone through residential school, and I told the Archbishop, "It's not about an apology. We know that's an external political process. It is about us forgiving, and understanding that process. We know that happened. And we have to take ownership, and move forward."

I went home, and I broke down because this is what an Elder said ... I took it literally what you put in your draft concept document. You had two initiatives:

## Questions to the Minister

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Improving outcomes for children, families and youth and enhancing opportunities. And this is what she said to me, "The racism that stems from the inequities still is in our communities. What it's telling me is that only the non-Aboriginal people can raise our children right because they have nothing to worry about. As a First Nation person raising a child ... other people's children in my community ... I don't get the same privileges. I don't get the equity funding. I don't get any of those. So I've got to continue worrying about whether I'm going to do justice for that child."

That hurt my feelings. You know how I feel about racism. And so when an Elder tells me that, there has to be something we can do. But I don't see it in your draft document ... how we're going to improve that relationship, and to be truly honest about it. As it is, that family is probably struggling but has the heart to take on new children. And I think that's something that needs to be in the draft document. I think it's really important.

I have other things I want to report, but I just thought I'd share that with you because I thought it was so heartfelt, and she's raised many children without any help at all from anybody. So I just think it's important that we don't make our parents feel less than because that's what it felt like, and that's what she said.

### Response: Honourable Yvonne Fritz

So what I would welcome, and I'm really pleased that you brought that forward because we are going on the 9<sup>th</sup>, as I was saying, through Chief Paul's invitation. I'd welcome it even hopefully by the end of today. Working with staff, please put those words in a way that you would like to see it and I can incorporate that in the document, and take that to the table as well for the other Chiefs to review on the 9<sup>th</sup>. It's critical that we do that ... and as well, any other individual here today who feels that there should be something else in the document. This is simply a Concept Document. It's a document about relationships. It's a document

about Children and Youth Services Ministry working with our First Nations people and that we will have a relationship. It's simply a concept. Some people call it a letter of intent, others call it whatever they choose to. For us it's a concept, because that's what we've been discussing over the past year. So I'd appreciate that, Chief. Thank you.

### Gayle Strikes With A Gun, Chief of Piikani First Nation

I just have a comment. I'm new, fairly new, and this is my first meeting, which is nice to see. I'm just somewhat concerned because I think in the last couple of days, I did read in the newspaper that we have 11 children in care ... I think it's 11 children, who have died while they're in care, and so that's a real concern for me. Some of these children are Aboriginal children.

We, as leaders and First Nations, really care for our children and love our children, and we do need to ensure that our children have the right to be raised in our traditional setting. And you know that the number of children in care today is extremely high ... First Nations children ... and that's very concerning for us.

I want to state too, that with the new government coming in, as the Chiefs have stated, we need to ensure that the process of where we're at right now, that it continues because we need to be equal partners and we cannot have decisions and directives coming down on us. We need to be sitting at the table with the people making these decisions. It is in the interest of our children.

### Response: Honourable Yvonne Fritz

Thank you, Chief. I know that these 11 children that you're referring to... that is 11 children who had serious injury while in care last year. The deaths that we had over the past year were five. The year before that it was three. Even one is too many and that's what we are working from Chief. I hear you and that's why today is important too. I'm glad that you're here. We need to develop solutions as to how we can help.

## Victor Horseman, Grand Chief Liaison Officer, Treaty 8

I want to thank the Elder for her guidance this morning and all of our Chiefs. The question I have is the federal government endorsed the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. Within those rights are certain articles for the protection of children as well. It would be really great if you, as the Minister, could take the message back to Cabinet to have them further recognize the United Nations Declaration of Right of Indigenous People and if you could incorporate the articles within the MOU that we're working on. I think that would affirm and also endorse what we're working towards. That's a comment I'd like to bring to the table.

### Response: Honourable Yvonne Fritz

Thank you, Victor. I'll take that to heart. I'll have a look at that and review that. I can't comment on it right now because I don't know enough about it. But I haven't heard the question before either. I appreciate you creating the awareness here today.

## Victor Horseman

The federal government endorsed ... and they're one of the last ... Canada, the United States and Australia are the last countries to endorse the United Nations

Rights of Indigenous People. Canada and the United States have endorsed the Rights ... the Declarations.

When we first started our bylaws on working towards the MOU, we were looking for guiding principles, and I thought I had mentioned this at the table with Steve and Mary, but I think it's really important that the Province, the provincial government, recognize those rights and affirm those rights with us.

### Response: Honourable Yvonne Fritz

Victor, have you had a chance to bring that to Minister Webber too?

## Victor Horseman

He mentioned it at a few of the Protocol Meetings. I know myself and other Chiefs will bring this to the Province. If we work together and affirm those rights it will move our agenda forward.

### Response: Honourable Yvonne Fritz

Thank you. Yes. And now you see the importance of recording every word, so that won't be lost, that comment. I know that the Aboriginal Minister, Len Webber, would be very interested in that as well. He reads the reports.

## Introduction of Dr. Nico Trocmé: Steve MacDonald

**T**hank you. And thank you, Minister Fritz, for your opening remarks. Your words are always inspirational. Thank you for your leadership today. You've been a pleasure to work with at this table. Part of the agenda this afternoon is to talk about how we continue the momentum ... so if the Minister does move on to bigger and better things ... and she will still be in our hearts ... how can we keep this amazing table alive and working for the benefit of kids and the community.

Nico, welcome. I have a long introduction of you here, but there's a summary of your many accomplishments everyone can read. Minister already acknowledged Nico's work on the Child Intervention Review Panel he was involved in just recently. Nico is a respected researcher in the area of child welfare.

He's here today because at the June meeting there were conversation about the need for better information and data so we can understand what's going on. Chief Paul talked about the need to track children. Well, Nico has a wealth of information on what's happening in Alberta, and what's happening in Canada, and what's happening in the world. Today he's here to share with us the wisdom and facts so we can begin to move forward based on evidence as opposed to just pieces of information. I'm going to stop there, and turn it over to Nico.

We had dinner last night, and we talked a bit about some of his thinking, and I think you're going to find his conversation with us today very, very informative; so thank you, Nico.



## Keynote Address: Dr. Nico Trocmé, Philip Fisher Chair in Social Work, McGill University

**T**hank you, Steve and Minister. Thank you very much for the invitation. Elder Cardinal, Elder Blackwater, Chiefs, Chairs, Co-Chairs, and other participants, thank you very much for giving me some time to talk a bit about some of the work we've been doing.

I'm coming here this morning with a slightly different hat on, the hat of the researcher, to talk about some of the work we've been doing most recently across Canada.

And ... combination of an apology, but I think also opportunity. We've been collecting data from across Canada for over ten years now on children receiving child welfare services. I'll be presenting some slides\* with some data, so for those people who are sitting the closest to the screen, you might want to eventually turn your chair around, or move down a bit. The apology is that we have a wealth of information now on Aboriginal and, in particular, First Nations children receiving services across Canada, but we're just starting to analyse the data. We're working closely with a national First Nations advisory committee in interpreting and understanding it, so this is not yet the time when I can present to you the interesting, at times disheartening, at other times more positive, data coming out on that side of the research. What I'm going to do today is really talk more globally about what's been happening across Canada in child welfare, and present to you some of the results of the research that we have been doing.

I think the opportunity here is that while it's absolutely critical ... and this is what's bringing you together today ... to focus on the needs of Aboriginal children, I think what we can see just by looking generally at children in the child welfare system is a much more complex picture than is often portrayed publically with respect to who our kids are, and why we're involved.

The message that I'm going to be focusing on is the importance of paying more attention to that complexity

and not simply thinking about our children in terms of words like "abuse", but also to understand the much broader range of emotional and developmental needs facing these children and their families. That's what I'll be covering.

I really wanted to provide you with some of the data, some of the numbers. It's all data that's available publically in reports that we can distribute. Copies of the PowerPoint will be available, as well as the full report is readily available. So part of it is giving you an overview of the kind of data we have, to also equip you so that you have access to that data in ways that might be helpful in some of the work that you might be doing. I'm going to give you an overview of what we've been finding, and look at some of the implications in terms of child welfare practice and policy.

**As child welfare workers, and child welfare agencies, we have more power than just about anyone else in society. Police don't have as much power as we have with respect to being able to enter homes, gather information and remove children.**

Chief Paul's comments about the need to track children better is dear to my heart. People who know me know that I'll do anything to get data. I started off as a social worker working in child welfare. I wasn't all that good at it and decided that I had enormous admiration for people that I worked with who were able in a fifteen minute sit down with a family do what seemed to take me three or four meetings to do. I realized that I was much better off trying to collect data, to do research, and try to provide some of the background.

\* See Appendix 1

## Keynote Address

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One of the things that strikes me about ... it saddens me very much ... about our approach to child welfare is that on one hand we have enormous amount of powers ... whether it's delegated agencies, CFSAs, child welfare agencies across Canada. As child welfare workers, and child welfare agencies, we have more power than just about anyone else in society. Police don't have as much power as we have with respect to being able to enter homes, gather information and remove children. We bear an enormous responsibility. We, as the State, as the Province, as an agency, we take on an enormous amount of responsibility both with respect to protecting these children, and at times, taking on a corporate role in parenting these children.

One of the things that we're very quickly concerned about with assessing a situation is how well a parent knows their own child. A parent who doesn't know the child well, who's not responding to the child, who doesn't know what the child is doing in school, doesn't know about the child's friends, that raises questions for us with respect to is this really a good parent. And yet as the Province, we're terrible parents in terms of knowing about our children ... basic information about how long they've been in care; where they end up when they start out in care; the average age of children coming in, coming out, how often do they move in care.

This basic information is information that provinces and territories across Canada are struggling to try and put together. Now, the good news is that two provinces with the best information in terms of tracking children right now are Alberta and Quebec. BC is developing some very interesting data. We're doing a better job at tracking it, but the data, the information about who these kids are, or what their needs are, is essential. The devil is in the details. What is the profile of these children? What is the profile of these families? That's essential for us to understand.

At times ... and you're going to see I'm going to spend a few minutes talking about the methodology ... at times it's going to sound very technical, and maybe a little

boring, but this is about trying to understand what's happening to the kids as they go through the child welfare system.

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**Jordan ended up spending the rest of his life in hospital, dying in hospital, never being able to go back to the family environment because people couldn't agree on how to provide funding for the child.**

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This particular project, *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse & Neglect*, is one that's been ongoing for over 10 years. It started off when we came to realize that there was, at the time, absolutely no information at a national level describing children and dependents coming into contact with the child welfare system. So, each province has its own information system, struggling with providing some minimal information, and it certainly has improved over time. But there was really no way of getting a sense of how many children across Canada were receiving services from child welfare systems, and why they were receiving services. So, we've been working with the public health agencies in Canada, and provinces and territories to find ways to collect some of this information, and we've run three studies I'm going to be presenting to you. As a result of those three studies ... we've run three studies over the last decade that provide kind of a snapshot of children and families as they come into contact with the child welfare system.

For the 2008 study, we dedicated the study to the memory of Jordan River Anderson. I'm sure most of you know Jordan's story, but just very briefly to remind you, because it's a powerful reminder of how important



it is for us to find better ways to collaborate, better ways to pull together. Jordan was a child who was born on a reserve in Saskatchewan with serious medical needs. He ended up being hospitalized to make those needs stabilized, and was then in a position to go back home. There was a foster home in the community that was willing, and prepared, and equipped to meet Jordan's needs. But, essentially, as a result of a conflict that I'm sure many of you are aware of around funding, Jordan ended up spending the rest of his life in hospital, dying in hospital, never being able to go back to the family environment because people couldn't agree on how to provide funding for the child. And, you know, clearly it would have been a much less expensive, much less intrusive environment, but because of that lack of collaboration, the lack of cooperation, Jordan ended up dying in hospital, not near family, not near friends.

The story of Jordan is a reminder to us that we have to find better ways to work together for the families that we work with. Whether you're an Aboriginal agency, a mainstream agency, whether you're a provincial organization, a territorial organization, no matter if you're a private agency, a public agency, the families just see us as the government. They don't care about these distinctions. They expect us to be able to work together. They expect us to be sharing information, and to be working collaboratively, to know who the children are that we're serving. And this is our responsibility. This is where we've really been trying to push this study to gain a better understanding of who these children are, and who the families are, and what are their needs.

So this is a study that I will go over quickly just on the background. It receives funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba.

One of the things in particular that is going to be interesting and to be able to share in the long term with you is that we've gathered extra information in Alberta now over two cycles of the study, so we will be able to

talk a lot more about the portrait of children coming into the child welfare system in Alberta. And we've also, for the first time, been able to gather information specifically on First Nations children, and I'll speak a little more about that later on.

Here, I'm focusing on the overall picture. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, which has finally changed its name to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, provided funding as well, along with a number of scientific organizations, McGill, and Toronto, et cetera.



Hon. Yvonne Fritz with Dr. Nico Trocmé

More importantly, this is a study that was done with input from over 2,000 child welfare workers who completed the forms, who sent us information, who participated in the training for the study, and the agencies and managers who supported them. So, just a few details about methodology and again, I know this isn't the most exciting piece, but I just want to make sure that you understand because I'm going to be presenting some numbers that are estimates for all of Canada, and I want you to understand what the estimates say, and don't say, and some of their limitations. With this kind

## Keynote Address

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of study, the challenge is there really isn't a common way of defining what is an investigation, what is child abuse, what is child neglect. Because every province and territory has their own way of doing things, what we ended up doing was going directly to the investigating social workers to gather information with our own data collection form, training them, using our definitions, so there would be a standard way of describing these children, and parents.

The first challenge was just simply to figure out who does the child welfare investigations across Canada. We spent a good six months just coming up with a list of all the child welfare organizations. At that time, in 2008, there were a little over 400 child welfare organizations that did investigations, and we randomly sampled 112 organizations across Canada. This [slide]\* just gives you a sense of the distribution. We have 14 child welfare organizations in Alberta that participated in the study, and overall we had, in addition to mainstream agencies, 23 Aboriginal delegated agencies participating in the studies. So, these were agencies that do their own investigations, look after children in care and this is one of the richer elements of the study.

Again, I won't be able to go into detail today but I'm hoping that if I don't bore you too much with the data slides and the methodology that you'll invite me again in the future to talk more about what we've learned of the Aboriginal organizations serving First Nations children.

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**But more importantly, we know that for every child who's identified by the child welfare system, there's at least one if not two other children who are not known to the child welfare system.**

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\* See Appendix 1

From there we selected cases that were opened from October to December of 2008, so the main study is based on a core sample of close to 10,000 cases opened during that period, and then from there we identified how many children had been investigated. All of the estimates that I'm presenting today ... so we would be seeing numbers of 100,000, 200,000 ... those are estimates based on a sample of 15,980 investigations. We gathered information on close to 16,000 investigations directly from about 2,000 child welfare workers participating in the study. That's all I'm going to say about it. So the main key is to remember that the numbers that come up next are estimates, fairly accurate estimates but we didn't go and track all 2,000 investigations.

A few things to remind ourselves of ... first of all, this is just about cases of reported child abuse and neglect. These are cases known to the child protection system. Excluded from this are cases that are investigated only by the police. There's a growing number of sexual abuse cases that happen involving perpetrators who are not part of the family that are only investigated by the police. Some types of physical abuses are, again, outside of the family and are only investigated by the police. So we're not including those cases. But more importantly, we know that for every child who's identified by the child welfare system, there's at least one if not two other children who are not known to the child welfare system. So this is only about those children who come to our attention.

This is information collected directly from the child welfare workers, which is both the strength but also a bit of limitation. The strength is that we're not going to provincial data systems; we're not using provincial definitions. We've really gone to workers to get their clinical opinions about these families. But keep in mind that this is information that hasn't been validated beyond that. So, for instance, on the question of the identity, the cultural identity of the child or the Aboriginal heritage of the child, this is the worker's best

guess, their judgment. We didn't go separately to the child or the family to confirm any of this information.

The other piece is that this is about what happens during the investigation. We do not have data on what happens after the investigation. This is, essentially, information about the first six weeks of contact between child welfare agencies and us. So, for instance, one of the things we look at is the number of children who come into care during the investigation. Missing from that are children coming into care later on. We're only tracking information through the first weeks of the contact between the child welfare system and the family.

Other pieces to note: This is not data that's been collected or designed to evaluate the quality of services. This is very descriptive. But I think there's a lot we can learn just by describing the children and families we serve.

Clearly, the most interesting question down the road is the evaluation question: Are the services we're providing making a difference? Are children and families benefiting from this intervention? We're not able to answer that question with the data that we have. This really is that initial picture of the children and families who have come into contact with the system.

One of the things we're very interested in is when there are changes over time; so I'll be focusing on that ... what's happened over the last 10 years across Canada. But just to note that there also have been some changes in the way we define maltreatment and types of maltreatment. Those methodological changes at times limit some of the comparisons we made. Just the last point ... again, the numbers are weighted annual estimates.

So all that set aside, what did we find? In 1998, there were 135,000 investigations ... children who were investigated because of concerns about abuse or neglect. Dramatic change occurred between 1998 and 2003. The number of investigations almost doubled.

They went from 135,000 to 235,000. From 2003 to 2008 there was virtually no change in the number of investigations.

I'm not going to go into the data for Alberta yet because we just sent in a preliminary report and we're waiting for feedback; but I can tell you, generally, that the pattern from 2003 to 2008 is not that different. It's a slight decline actually in the number of investigations. We don't have Alberta data for 1998. The general picture of the investigations ... of levelling off, declining slightly in Alberta between 2003 and 2008 ... is similar to the picture across Canada.



Loretta Bellerose, Chief Gayle Strikes With a Gun and Elder Eva Cardinal

Another way to think about this, and I'm going to apologize for this more of a public health way of presenting the data. As we do comparisons across provinces for instance, we will have to find a unit of comparisons. So what we do is we either look at the whole number of children who are investigated or another way of counting is looking at how many children are investigated per 1,000 children of population ... so similar to a percentage.

In 1998, two per cent of children or 21 per 1,000 children were investigated because of concerns of abuse and neglect. By 2003 that increased to 38 per 1,000 and the numbers were up, like I say, now 39 per 1,000. So there are two ways of thinking about this. We can either think of it in terms of over 200,000 children

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in Canada every year being reported and investigated by the child welfare system, or 39 per 1,000 or close to four per cent. This is a large number of children. It's a very significant number of children. This is the opportunity we have for reaching out through the child welfare system to the most high-risk group of children in Canada.

We are successfully identifying them. We're successfully coming into contact with these children and families. The challenge is, what do we do with this opportunity? The challenge isn't coming into contact with these children and identifying them, having school teachers, police officers, families, parents themselves call up child welfare saying we need help. That's the starting point. The challenge actually is once you receive that call, how do you respond. And so part of that question in how do we respond to it lies in understanding what are these investigations, what are they about. How to respond is to do an investigation and then one of the things we look at is how many of those investigations end up leading to ongoing services.

This is one of the first slides\* that starts leading us to question and thinking about how we've organized our response. In 1998, 35 per cent of investigations led to ongoing services. By 2003, that had dropped to 29 per cent and in 2008, it's down to 27 per cent. So one of the first questions that come to mind for us is: If your objective is to get services to these children and their families, have we organized our child welfare systems in an optimal way where close to three-quarters of investigations are not leading into ongoing services? Is there something about that entry point, something about that first call that needs to be thought through differently so that we spend perhaps a little less time investigating and a little more time in providing services? This is the first question. I can't tell you whether this is the optimal mix but it certainly is clear that one of the things that's starting to change is that we're providing services to fewer and fewer children

although the number of investigations had increased since the mid 1990s.

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**Keep in mind that informal kinship care is one that is generally not tracked by provincial statistics ...**

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Another way to think about what's happening at the front end is how many children end up coming into care ... again, this is going into care during the investigation. The other thing that's interesting here is that while the number of investigations almost doubled from 1998 to 2003, the number of children actually going into care did not change that much. There was a slight increase. And as a proportion of investigations, the number of children and the proportion of children going into care actually went down. So 13 per cent of investigations led to a change for a child either going to informal or formal care. By 1998, it had dropped to eight per cent, which, on one hand, certainly in terms of the public's perception, is an important message which is that a call to the child welfare does not lead to removal, does not automatically lead to a child coming into care. In fact, a child coming into care is a rare event relative to the much larger number of children who receive some type of assessment at the outset or may receive some type of ongoing service.

Within that number, we track three different types of care. Keep in mind that informal kinship care is one that is generally not tracked by provincial statistics; it's not formally reported on. In fact, most research in child welfare does not really pay attention to this group of children. It's one that we've always been very interested in. At the time of an investigation, a fairly significant number of children, either as a result of the investigation, or as part of the events that would lead up to that, end up moving to go live with an aunt, a

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\* See Appendix 1

grandparent, a neighbour, extended family, but not through some type of formal placement mechanism but simply as a result of, or as part of, the events leading up to the investigation.

So other children who have come into care, of the roughly 19,000 children who came into care at the time of the investigation in 2008, almost half of those cases were situations where a child was really moving into an informal arrangement, not under the supervision of a child welfare agency, without funding from a child welfare agency.

The next group of children going into care – the majority of the children ended up getting care are children going into foster care or kinship care, and in most provinces we would then separate out and look at foster care and kinship care; but across Canada we're not able to separate those categories. About one per cent of children who are investigated go into some type of residential care. Looking at these changes over time, one of the things that strikes me here is that, again, you can recall that from 1998 to 2003, the number of investigations had almost doubled, but actually the number of children going into care essentially, especially going into foster care, really hadn't changed over that 10 year period.



Rose Lameman and Sharon Anderson

The expansion in reports to child welfare really seems to be about something different than identifying children who need child welfare. Identifying something else

... what is that something else? That's what I want to spend a little more time exploring.

One of the things in particular that we've tried to understand in 2008, with the 2008 study, is that when we talk about investigations of maltreatment, we assumed originally when we ran the first incident study ... we assumed it would be documenting those situations where there had been some kind of alleged event in the past, and this really was an investigation of maltreatment. What we found looking through some of the files after the fact is that calls into the child welfare system really are about two different types of situations. The majority of situations are the situations where there are concerns about something having happened already to a child. But there's also a smaller group of situations where they're called investigations but are really not an investigation. In other words, we're not looking at past events, but these are situations where the main concern is future risk. For instance, to get a call from the hospital about a newborn ... clearly the call is not about a concern that this child has been abused or neglected. The concern is about future risk of abuse and neglect.

So one of the issues we're trying to sort out in our investigations is what truly is an investigation of maltreatment, and what is a risk assessment only. That is, you're not going in asking about past events; you're trying to assess the chance of abuse in the future. What we found was that across Canada, about a quarter of all investigations really were risk investigations. So they weren't investigations about a past event. They were assessments about future events.

The reason I have to speak to this separately is that in the past studies we were focusing only on maltreatment investigations. We really haven't pulled out the risk investigations. Risk investigations ... in most of them, as a result of the investigation, the determination is there's no future risk. In 16 per cent of the investigations, they weren't able to determine the level of risk. In 20 per cent, risk is confirmed.

## Keynote Address

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... calls into the child welfare system really are about two different types of situations. ... situations where there are concerns about something having happened already to a child. ... [and] situations ... where the main concern is future risk.

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But what I want to focus on here is one of the traditional maltreatment investigations. So this is a situation where the person calling the child welfare agency is saying, "We think this child has been harmed in some way. Please investigate to see what the level of harm is."

We started off with a little over 200,000 investigations, but here, we're focusing on the 174,000 maltreatment investigations, or situations where there's been an allegation about a past offence.

Question number one is: In an allegation, in how many cases is maltreatment substantiated? Actually, we found that in half the cases, maltreatment was substantiated, another 10 per cent was suspected, and in over 40 per cent of cases it was unfounded. It was invalid, unfounded. Unfounded doesn't mean that it was malicious. It simply was an event that the person reporting does exactly what the law says, which is, if you have concerns about the possibility of maltreatment, you shouldn't be investigating it. You should be asking the child welfare agency to investigate it if there is reason to be concerned or not. So in unfounded cases it's simply a situation where there may have been a suspicious injury, and it turns out that after investigation it was due to a playground accident and really had nothing to do with maltreatment.

Let's go a little further and look specifically at those cases where maltreatment was investigated. So, we're

moving from a little over 200,000 investigations now to 85,000 cases where there was determination that the child had been maltreated. And the questions then are: So what are the types of maltreatment? Who are these children? How concerned do we need to be about their safety? What are some of their other needs?

In cases of substantiated maltreatment, what is the nature ... the primary type of maltreatment. The two types of maltreatment that are substantiated most often are exposure to intimate partner violence, and child neglect. The vast majority of investigations we're doing are situations of neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence. Physical abuse was substantiated as a primary form of maltreatment in 20 per cent of cases; sexual abuse in three per cent and emotional maltreatment in nine per cent. This is pretty standard, not only if we look at distribution in Canada for 2008; you'll see it's similar, for instance, to distribution cases in Australia.

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The two types of maltreatment that are substantiated most often are exposure to intimate partner violence, and child neglect.

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In the United States, the large portion of neglect cases is very similar. There are far fewer cases of exposure to intimate partner violence. One of the differences between the American child welfare system and the Canadian one is ... for whatever reasons, it's really hard to backtrack and figure out where that decision was made ... there has been a longstanding view that in situations where children are exposed to intimate partner violence, the child welfare system should be involved in Canada. In the United States, there has not been the same level of involvement from child welfare authorities.

Intimate partner violence ... domestic violence ... no surprise; but one of the questions that arises is when exposure to intimate partner violence is a real challenge for the child welfare system. The question essentially is: Is this maltreatment? Who is the abuser? who is the maltreater? Clearly, it's the person who is the aggressor. If it's an abusive spouse, that spouse is the person who is maltreating both the victimized spouse, and the child who is exposed to it. But the victimized spouse, often the mother, can end up feeling that somehow she's being held responsible for her own victimization, and somehow, she's the one who didn't protect her child from her victimization. So it's a very complex situation to try to think about. This may be a form of maltreatment. Is this really maltreatment, or is it a different type of problem? And what exactly is the role of the child welfare system in this type of problem?

I think there's a very important role for us to play, but I don't think it's thought enough about. Who exactly are we protecting? Are we communicating as effectively as possible, in particular to women who are victims of violence, that child welfare is not there to take their children away, but child welfare is there to help protect them, to protect their child, and the mother? This is really the message we want to convey. In fact, in some analyses that we've done, looking specifically at these cases, we found that in only two per cent of these cases the children were being removed. In 98 per cent of the cases of exposure to intimate partner violence, the children were being kept at home. And yet, if you speak to women in shelters, their impression is the exact opposite. Their impression is that when child welfare gets involved, that usually means that their children are going to be removed.

We found that in 98 per cent of cases of exposure to intimate partner violence, the children were not being removed. There's a real disjuncture between the public's view of how we respond, and our actual practice ... another example of the fact that we really haven't done a good enough job documenting what we

do, and presenting to the public clearly what it is that we do.

### Sexual abuse is continually declining, and we really need to try and understand why.

In addition to these primary types of maltreatment, we tracked 34 sub-types of maltreatment within those five categories. I'm not going to go into those at this particular point, but we were able, for instance with exposure to intimate partner violence, we were able to distinguish between situations where a child was physically present at the time of a physically violent incident, where a child was exposed to emotional maltreatment, emotional abuse by one spouse against the other, or where a child was an indirect witness; that is, they didn't actually see the violent event but saw the results of it. For each one of these and for sexual abuse, we're able to make a distinction in situations where there was physical contact versus situations where it may have been abuse over the internet, or in some other form. In each one of these we have further possibility of analysis. But again, for the sake of just getting an overview, I'm just focusing on these five primary categories. Also, another thing to note is that there's overlap between these. So these are the primary forms of maltreatment, but in 18 per cent of cases there was more than one form of maltreatment documented.



Chief Ernest Wesley, Belva Wesley and Theresa Bull

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I want to go back, just looking at what's changed over time. This is a busy slide\*, so we'll spend a few minutes with it. Let's start actually at the very bottom, which is child sexual abuse. So while we have this enormous increase in rates between 1998 and 2003, the one exception has been child sexual abuse. Rates of reported child sexual abuse have been declining across Canada actually since 1993 when we first did the study in Ontario. We've looked at provincial reports, as well. We've looked at rates of sexual abuse in a number of other countries. Rates of reports of sexual abuse have been declining systematically in the United States. So one of the first things that we need to remember as we start looking at the phenomenal increase in reports between 1998 and 2003 is that it's not necessarily what's been happening to all cases of maltreatment, and sexual abuse has been continually declining. Sexual abuse is continually declining, and we really need to try and understand why. A perfect example of a potential great story, or potentially a very concerning story.

So the great story, which I think there's a fair amount of evidence to support ... a colleague of mine in the United States who's looked at a lot of American data, certainly has come very strongly under the good story connotation. I'm a little more sceptical, but I'm hoping it's the great story. The great story is that child sexual abuse is the one type of maltreatment where we've made the most effort in terms of public campaigns, programs for victims, programs for offenders, where we've really made an effort to try to draw awareness to the problem of sexual abuse. It may very well be that as a result of this greater awareness, our systematic response to it, our very clear messages to offenders, very clear messages of protection for victims, and clear support we provide, it may very well be why we're actually seeing a decline in sexual abuse in the general population.

The concerning story, the alternative, is that sexual abuse has not gone down in the general population, but that victims and their parents are increasingly reluctant

to disclose sexual abuse; that the very strength of our response may be scaring some families away thinking, "I don't want any investigation. I don't want the police in here. It's too much for my child. Let's just keep this under wraps."

We don't know which it is. It's pretty important to figure that one out because if it's the first one, we should be saying, "This is a victory. This is a model. This is how we should be dealing with other forms of maltreatment." On the other hand, if it's the other, we should be asking ourselves ... maybe we need to fine tune our responses. Maybe we need a little more flexibility. Maybe we need to give victims and non-offending parents a little more control over what happens in the case of the investigation. I honestly don't know which one it is, and that's one of the things we're working hard to try and understand. And that's for sexual abuse.

What's been happening for some of the other types of maltreatment? Rates of physical abuse went from a little over two and a half per 1,000 children to over five per 1,000, and it dropped almost right back to the same level.

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**... we think a certain number of emotional maltreatment and physical abuse cases were really risk-only cases. ... That is, situations where there were no allegations of past events, but concerns about future events ...**

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Rates for emotional maltreatment, a very similar increase and decline to the same level. So there seems to be some type of shift in awareness from 1998 to 2003; maybe a shift in definitions, a shift in standards. Somehow something's changed in practice ... both

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\* See Appendix 1



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emotional maltreatment, and physical abuse. We're categorizing those cases differently. We're investigating them less.

And I'm going to take you to the next slide\* and speak a little more to that. I just want to look at neglect and exposure between the intimate partner violence. Those are the types of maltreatment that grew the fastest from 1998 to 2003. Exposure to intimate partner violence was at under two per 1,000, one and a half per 1,000 in 1998 ... it actually was almost at the same rate as sexual abuse in 1998. Now exposure to intimate partner violence is being reported twelve times more often than sexual abuse.

A dramatic shift with the introduction of really a whole new category that we weren't dealing with in 1998, and we're now dealing with. So each time we look at this kind of change, I think we need to be asking ourselves: Have we tailored our services? Have we tailored our response to this dramatic transformation in the children and the families that we're serving?

With neglect, a similar pattern. A sharp increase, and more of a levelling off, a slight decline, but the numbers for neglect haven't changed ... hadn't dropped back the way they have with physical abuse, and emotional maltreatment.

Now, this is where I'm going to be boringly methodological again. One of the reasons ... there's a bit of an artificial definitional effect with respect to the decline in emotional maltreatment, and I think physical abuse.

As I've mentioned earlier, one of the things we did in 2008 was for the first time we started tracking risk-only investigations, where in the past we were only looking at investigations with past maltreatment events. We think, in practice, that workers were forcing risk-only investigations into our categories. So in 2003, we think a certain number of emotional maltreatment and physical abuse cases were really risk-only cases; that



Chief James Ahnassay, Hon. Yvonne Fritz and Chief Jim Badger



Twylla Starlight



Robert Bastien

\* See Appendix 1

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is, situations where there were no allegations of past events, but concerns about future events, and those essentially are now being picked up. This is part of the difficulty involved in trying to update and change our definitions as practice evolves.

In 1998 and in 1993 when we first developed the methodology, risk assessment was not a common way of proceeding. Investigations were really only focusing on situations where there already had been concerns in that family. The practice changed. We caught up with our definitions but, unfortunately, we can't really figure out the 2003 cases. We think part of the increase from 1998 to 2003 was a shift in practice where we started investigating more and more situations where risk was the main reason we were involved as opposed to an investigation of past offence.



Marcel Weasel Head

So a little complicated, but the take-home message is that the 1998 to 2008 rates of sexual abuse have been declining. Rates of physical abuse and emotional maltreatment increased and have levelled off or declined. Rates of exposure to intimate partner violence and neglect were the main drivers in the expansion of caseloads from 1998 to 2003, and have not declined as significantly as the other types.

I'm going to dig down one more level and then look more specifically. So of those cases that are reported, in how many situations is there some type of harm to the

child? And this is probably one of the most important slides\* from my perspective, and we'll spend a few minutes on it. It's a complicated one. These are situations of substantiated maltreatment. So again, just to remind you, we started off with over 200,000 investigations, but we have a core number of substantiated cases, 90,000 cases where maltreatment was substantiated. Of those cases, we asked the workers, "Once you did your investigation, was there any evidence of physical harm, or emotional harm?" So these are cases where the workers said, "Yes, the child is a victim of abuse or neglect." Now to just confirm, the question is: In how many of those cases was there evidence of harm? In 92 per cent of cases, there was absolutely no mark on the child, no evidence of physical harm. In another five per cent of the cases, there was some mark, generally bruising of a child that did not require medical attention. In three per cent of the cases, there was serious physical harm requiring medical attention. The reason I draw our attention to this is this is the exact opposite of what I think members of the general public think with respect to the work that we do. They assume the vast majority of the cases we're involved in are situations where kids are being physically harmed.

I'll talk in a few minutes about what I think is really happening with these children. I can even give you a more specific breakdown in terms of the types of injuries. So these are just straight counts across Canada ... there were 4,000 out of the over 200,000 investigations, the 4,754 cases that we estimated where there were bruises, cuts, or scrapes; 172 cases where there were burns or scalds; 175 broken bones; 325 head trauma; and another close to 2,000 where there's some type of other health condition requiring some type of medical attention, others not.

Emotional harm ... the rates of documented emotional harm are generally a little higher, so in 12 per cent of the cases there was some type of evidence of emotional harm, some evidence of immediate trauma to the child:

\* See Appendix 1

sleep difficulties, problems with friends, withdrawal, problems with eating. In 17 per cent of cases, there was evidence of emotional harm that was severe enough to require some type of professional intervention, but in another 71 per cent of cases there was no evidence of emotional harm.

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**... the number one predictor  
of a decision to place a child in care  
has to do with this set of risk factors  
of level of care as opposed to the  
characteristics of the child.**

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And to note about that, however, is that we know, first of all, that for a lot of children who are victims of abuse and neglect, the emotional harm emerges much later on, so that they may not be symptomatic at the time of the investigation. The other thing is this is based on the contact that the investigating worker has with that child and family. This might be two or three visits with that child. A worker that has ongoing contact with one of these children over a period of six months or a year might have a much better sense of the level of trauma and emotional harm. So this is just what's evident to the investigating worker. Nevertheless, one of the surprises for me when I looked at this data is the large proportion of situations where we're saying abuse and neglect have occurred, that these children are victims of abuse, and victims of neglect, but there actually isn't any concrete evidence of emotional or physical harm associated with it.

This is consistent with our legislation. In every single province and territory, the legislation is very clear, which is that abuse or neglect involves situations where a child has been harmed or is at significant risk of harm. Clearly, what we are substantiating in most

situations, are situations where a parent's behaviour is seen as putting a child at risk of harm but there hasn't yet been any harm. So we are true to our commitment to try to be a little more preventive, and intervening early in these families prior to harm having occurred.

One of the things we do look at as well is how the child is functioning. Again, this is based on the worker's impression of the child. This is the investigating worker who will see the child two, three times at most.

So it's going to be an under count of problems. The types of problems that they document in close to half of the cases ... they identified one or more concerns ... and the most difficult concerns are academic difficulties, cause of depression, aggression, attachment issues, attention deficit disorder, intellectual developmental disabilities, unmet milestones, self-harming behaviours, and suicidal thoughts, documented less often, but nevertheless we're concerned with all those especially adolescent with suicidal thoughts.

In terms of the caregivers, now this is with the primary caregiver, what are the risk factors that the workers identified there. Being a victim of domestic violence was noted in over 45 per cent of the cases. Lack of social support, mental health issues, alcohol abuse, and drug or solvent abuse, physical health issues, having had a history of being in foster care or group care, and cognitive impairment were the other risk factors. So we have a sense of the profile of the parents. In fact, when we do any analyses, we find that if we look at, for instance, trying to distinguish between children who come into care and who don't, the number one predictor of a decision to place a child in care has to do with this set of risk factors of level of care as opposed to the characteristics of the child. The decision to bring the child in care is driven first and foremost by the presenting problems at the level of the parent.

Just in terms of the background, in terms of risk factors at the level of the community ... poverty we can't measure directly unfortunately ... but we know

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that over a third of these families have a dependence on social assistance. Moving frequently – 30 per cent of families had moved at least once; 10 per cent, two or more times in the past year. Problems with housing safety are noted very often or relatively often.

This slide\* is one of the children where maltreatment was substantiated ... what proportion are Aboriginal children, and what that tells us about over representation. Across Canada, about six per cent of children are Aboriginal. At the front end of the child welfare system, 22 per cent of substantiated investigations involve Aboriginal children. You will see in some of the analysis we'll be doing over the summer ... by the time we produce the First Nations report ... you'll see not only that Aboriginal, in particular, First Nations children, not only are likely to be reported but then more likely to be substantiated, and more likely to come into care. None of this is news to you but in terms of just getting some hard numbers, 22 per cent of substantiated cases involved Aboriginal children, and most of those being First Nations.

The First Nations report will be focusing on First Nations status. We'll be doing comparisons both between the profile of those children, as well as looking at the differences between investigations conducted by First Nations agencies and those conducted by main stream agencies.

I want to look at one more question, which is try to rethink what it is we're doing in these situations. In three per cent of situations of substantiated maltreatment, there's been some type of severe physical harm. In another three per cent of cases, we're dealing with sexual abuse. In another seven per cent of cases, we're dealing with neglect of children under three. Those three categories together strike me as what we would call situations where urgent protection is required. These are situations where you don't have 48 hours, where speed of response is absolutely critical. Is this a child who has an injury due to just being a rambunctious child, or is



Brian Broughton

this a child who's going home to a situation where the next injury could be deadly? It's a very difficult, very complex, urgent response required. Is this a situation of neglect where it's a neglected child under three where there is a chance that next time the accident will lead to permanent damage to the child?

But the other 87 per cent of substantiated cases of maltreatment, I'm not sure that we need to be thinking about these quite in the same way. I don't know that we've given enough thought to distinguishing between situations without urgent maltreatment versus really the other group which are situations where the child's development and well-being are in danger. And this is complicated because the language around endangerment of well-being and development just isn't as salient. It doesn't speak as much to the public. People have tended to see our work through the lens of the situations where urgent intervention is required, but far less time has been spent thinking about the fact that the vast majority of situations we're dealing with are ones where it's the well-being of the child that is being threatened.

In fact, if you look at legislation ... right across Canada, in every single province and territory, safety and well-being ... in Alberta – survival, security or development of the child ... the concept that we are there both for safety and well-being is very clearly enshrined in our legislation. And yet when we present to the children

\* See Appendix 1

and families we work with, they still are falling back, I think, on old habits of thinking about these primarily through the lens of safety and not sufficiently through the lens of well-being in asking ourselves what are the implications.

Endangerment ... that is not a small thing. You compare abused and neglected children to any other group of children and we're talking about thousands of studies where people have control for poverty, where they have control for housing situations, where they have control for any kind of variation, you find that maltreated children compared to any other group, compared to the poorest children, are delayed on every single measure.

If you look at them in terms of measures of early development, measure the school age ... one study I always go back to is the study where they were observing children in a classroom situation, an early year education classroom situation or watching some people who were blind graders who didn't know who was abused, didn't know who was neglected, just looking at these children play, who were blind graders, who had absolutely no difficulty just on a behaviour, were able to identify which ones were victims of abuse and neglect and which ones were not. But what really struck me with that study was they then went and spoke to the kids, just asked them, you know, a few non-directional questions: How they liked the school? Who they liked to play with? The kids knew who the victims were. They said, "Oh, I like the school. I've got friends, so and so, but I don't like playing with this kid. She's not my friend/he's not my friend." Even the children know who these kids are.

So it's not to say that these aren't very serious situations; they're very serious situations but they're not situations where it's the physical well-being of the child that is being threatened. It's where their spiritual, where their well-being, where their cognitive development is being threatened.

You compare the long-term development, for instance, for physically abused children to neglected children; neglected children fare far worse in the long-term than the physically abused children.

Look at the profile of the families. There again, compare mal-treating families to non-mal-treating families, the results are systematically the same as situations where substance abuse, where lack of social support, where extreme poverty are making the job of parenting that much more difficult. So the point here is not to say that these aren't situations where there isn't enormous need. There's enormous need. In fact, these are, in many respects, far more serious situations. You compare the long-term development, for instance, for physically abused children to neglected children; neglected children fare far worse in the long-term than the physically abused children. In all groups of children, the neglected, and in particular emotionally neglected children, do the worst. You have the worst outcome in adolescence; the worst outcomes in adulthood. But I'm not sure that we've really mastered the language or shaped our interventions with that in mind.

In the medical setting, we understand this difference between urgency and chronicity.

In child welfare, I'm not sure we've yet really developed a language to sufficiently distinguish between the two ...

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I think what's important here is that we have to disentangle urgent protection from chronic needs. And we need to think about, on one hand, in situations where urgent protection is the issue. This is really very much the focus of differential response, alternate response models, and Alberta was one of the lead provinces in developing ... tried to pull those apart. We need to differentiate situations where there's a need for urgent intervention, where the investigatory power of child welfare agencies is critical and where rapid response is critical. We need to distinguish where there are severe maltreatment and chronic family problems; where maybe our approach can be more flexible; where we don't have to go in within 24 hours; where we can spend a week, two weeks, making phone calls, connecting with people, making sure that the person who originally referred the family is kept informed, is kept part of the process; where the family doesn't necessarily see the child welfare intervention as an investigation but as an assessment.

Now, we're clear in a hospital setting, an emergency room setting. We know the difference between an open wound where you have to respond very quickly but we don't necessarily see that as being as a severe case. It's an urgent case. We know that if there's an open wound ... if someone who shows up with symptoms of early stages of cancer, we know that the cancer is far more serious and yet we're able to say the emergency room physician should treat the open wound first and,



Gordon Minde

in fact, the person with initial symptoms of cancer shouldn't even go to emergency but should be referred to the right specialist. If that takes a week or two to find the right person, we're much better off starting off with the right person, taking the time, and doing it properly.

In the medical setting, we understand this difference between urgency and chronicity. In child welfare, I'm not sure we've yet really developed a language to sufficiently distinguish between the two, and I think one of the challenges as we move forward, and it's certainly one of the challenges Alberta is taking on, where the alternate response model is needed.

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**The difficulty lies in generating a passionate commitment, and with that, the attention and resources that are necessary to effect change.**

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One of the challenges is to keep working on differentiating between these two groups and coming up with models of intervention that are appropriate for those situations of urgent protection versus those situations where a more flexible, more community oriented, better coordinated service response is appropriate. It strikes me as being at the heart of the dilemma that we have in child welfare.

Sorry it's a little long, but this is research a colleague of mine, Lucy Berliner, did. She did a lot of work in the area of child sexual abuse and later on, child neglect. She was commenting about how difficult it is to get people to focus on neglect, and to understand what we're trying to do. Her point was that it's not that we don't know that neglect is bad for kids. We even know that it can be really bad, worse than abuse sometimes and in some ways. The data make that pretty clear. The

One of the challenges is to keep working on ... models of intervention that are appropriate for those situations of urgent protection versus those situations where a more flexible, more community oriented, better coordinated service response is appropriate.

difficulty lies in generating a passionate commitment and with that the attention and resources that are necessary to effect change. There is something about abuse, that it is acts not omissions, that it is intentional not inadvertent, that it is discrete not diffuse, that it is brutal not insidious, that makes it so evocative not only to professionals but society at large.

So when Minister goes to Caucus to try to develop programs, to try to expand our service response, what speaks to people, what speaks to the Caucus, what speaks to the media, are cases of abuse, and concern around safety; but, in fact, the challenge is finding ways to gather attention and resources necessary to effect change. And this is the dilemma. Abuse speaks to people more. They understand our children primarily around the language of safety, primarily around language of physical harm, when the vast majority of children we're working with are children who are coming into contact with the child welfare system because of problems around their development, their well-being, their spiritual development, not just physical violence.

And so the challenge is how do we help the public understand the true nature of the children we are working with, and how do we transform our child welfare system to be truly responsive at both levels, not forgetting the urgent cases, but also finding ways to deal with these chronic, difficult family situations where it's not a quick response that's needed, but it's a very solid, long term response.

Thank you.

### Steve MacDonald

Thank you very much, Nico, for those insights, and turning all that data into actual information, and ultimately, knowledge for us.

We do have about 15 minutes to take any questions, as I'm sure some of this information has triggered some questions for people.

### Loiselle Arcand, First Nations Delegate, Alexander First Nation

I was just wondering ... throughout the process of collecting your data ... I know early in your presentation you mentioned that this wasn't designed to evaluate agencies or services ... I was just wondering if that hindered any of your findings, is one of my questions. The second question is did you see also while collecting the data certain times of year where maybe the stats went up, or came down through the different seasons?

### Response: Nico Trocmé

No, and no. It's not that we weren't trying to evaluate services because we were afraid to evaluate services, but that the methods involved, and the kinds of questions we needed to ask to evaluate services are very different from the ones we need to just try to describe these children. So, it's a complicated enough study to run on a national level, and the trick with these kind of studies is to stay very focused on what you're trying to do. Our primary focus was to describe the children, not to evaluate them.

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We absolutely need to be doing evaluation studies. I think that's one of the weakest areas. We spend maybe \$2 million, maybe \$3 million at the most across Canada evaluating what is an \$8 billion to \$10 billion dollar system. It wouldn't be acceptable in any other area to provide this level of services with so little evaluation.

Seasonal effects is one of the weaknesses of the study. We typically collect data only during a three month period in the fall. We can't analyse what type of seasonal effects there are. The problem there essentially is to try to get child welfare workers to complete all these forms already for a three month period takes an enormous amount of effort on their part. If we had to take it on over for 12 months, they would kill us or wouldn't let us in.

### Rose Lameman, Co-Chair, East Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority

What's going on? Was there a change in practice? Was there an economic boom? Was there a change in legislation? What was it?

### Response: Nico Trocmé

I think it's the first, more than anything else. A change in practice ... at times a very subtle change in practice, but sometimes driven by changes in legislation. But there are many situations where these changes preceded any change in legislation. So, changes in practice were first and foremost a dramatic expansion of our understanding of the emotional impact of maltreatment and then with that, the emotional impacts of exposure to intimate partner violence. Police started referring these cases to child welfare. Before they never did. We weren't involved with them. Exposure to intimate partner violence ... just those cases contributed to almost half the increase of the cases reported.

Likewise, emotional maltreatment really wasn't on the radar screen in 1998. So I think we've been able to link the shift in practice to broader understanding, not

only within the child welfare system, but professionals working outside the child welfare system being sensitive to the impact of the situation on the children.

### Chief Rose Laboucan

Thank you for your presentation. I was really intrigued by your point about emotional impact of maltreatment because I think that there needs to be further research study in that area regarding the residential school impact, for example. They were stripped, in my opinion, of the parenting skills, of the natural ability to love and care for someone in general. So if you think about that stripping and strapping the Indian out of that child, I just can't even begin to think of what kind of studies need to be done in that arena regarding the emotional and physical harm of a people to raise healthy, happy children. It's next to ... it's an impossible reality. So when we look at it from that perspective, in order to change the outcomes of the number of children in care, we have to address that at our level in our communities.

It was once said that you can delegate authority, but not responsibility. So that's a key component of anything. And in First Nation communities, there is a losing of that parenting skill because of residential schools.

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**We need to lift up our people ... We have to allow that to happen for our people to be really responsible, but we can't in the system that we're stuck in.**

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I will share a little story here. My mother-in-law, who has now passed on, she had 14 children. Out of the 14, only three did not go to residential school. She felt inadequate. She felt like she did something wrong. She felt like she wasn't good enough. But it wasn't by choice. It was not her choice to give up her children. When you look at it from that perspective, and when



I became part of that family, my son, when we went to visit, was going over to give her a hug, and she said, "You don't want to hug this ugly, old lady." That's how many generations later? She did not even want to accept that hug. So when you strip away even the simple hugging, which shows emotion, which shows love is taken away, somehow we need to address that.

I just feel it's important that any research that's being done, we have to look at some of these outcomes that are happening over here is because ... and I'm not blaming you. This is not about blame. I've never been to residential school. I consider myself one of the lucky ones. Only one of my siblings went to residential school, and only for three months because my father was very adamant that we didn't go there.

So I look at the trauma that's happened, and I look at responsibility as a big issue in our communities. But you're not only impacted from that residential school era; you're also have the Indian Act. You're also ... you know, all of these systems which create that dependency syndrome mentality. How can you be responsible?

We need to lift up our people is what I'm saying here, as nations, as leaders of our communities. We have to allow that to happen for our people to be really responsible, but we can't in the system that we're stuck in. And I just feel we have to also contribute to that change. That's all I'm saying. So I want to thank you ... that really stuck out ... the emotional impact of maltreatment. So if that's generational, then we need to look at that, and maybe research in that arena.

### **Brian Broughton, Co-Chair, North Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority**

I just had a question. What, in terms of the planning and the practice implications, if we're only getting ... I think you said for every child that's reported, one or two are not reported. Is that correct? Did I hear that correctly?

### **Response: Nico Trocmé**

Yes.

### **Brian Broughton**

And would you say that under reporting would apply similarly in Aboriginal communities, given their disproportionate representation in the population currently?

### **Response: Nico Trocmé**

I don't know. I don't know. One of the difficulties is we guesstimate the rate of under reporting. So we know that in particular with sexual abuse because we have a lot of studies where adults who are victims of sexual abuse and can tell us whether or not they were exploited or not. It's much harder to get at unreported cases than for other types of maltreatment because they're unreported. So we can only guesstimate.

Two reasons would make me think that there may not be more unreported maltreatment but certainly a lot of unreported maltreatment in certain Aboriginal communities. One of the things that happens, at least in Ontario, when communities received delegation, this is going back now almost 20 years ago, but when the first delegated agencies came in, there was a fairly



Hon. Yvonne Fritz with Grand Chief Arthur Noskey

## Keynote Address

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As soon as communities recognized the agency as being a First Nation agency, there was actually an increase in reports particularly when people became more comfortable in identifying problems that they weren't speaking to outsiders.

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naïve assumption that rates of reporting would actually go down, and they found the exact opposite. As soon as communities recognized the agency as being a First Nation agency, there was actually an increase in reports particularly when people became more comfortable in identifying problems that they weren't speaking to outsiders. So, you know, one of the things that we do find is as you pass on powers to Aboriginal communities, you tend to get an increase rather than a decrease even with children in care as problems emerge, problems that were hidden in the past.

The other is an American study that always concerns me. You need to look at the relations between the rates of child neglect and social welfare spending. The assumption is that those States that spend more on

social welfare would have lower rates of neglect. They found the exact opposite. The States that spent more money had higher rates of neglect. The conclusion that they arrived at was that the size of the problem was so large that none of the States were going to be spending enough money to truly support these families and so all that would happen was that the more they were spending on this initiative simply meant greater discovery, more professionals involved, more professionals become aware of problems.

So, a lot of evidence that there is an enormous amount of hidden maltreatment, and that as you expand services, develop them, make them more sensitive, or better equipped to respond, you tend to have an increase rather than a decrease in rates.

## Band Designate: Review and Recommendations

### Steve MacDonald

So our next topic this morning is the role of the Band Designate. Clarifying the role of the Band Designate has been an important topic since our inaugural meeting back in June of last year.

At that very first meeting that I had with the DFNA directors, and the representatives of First Nations, we had a conversation around this very matter. Over the past several weeks, representatives of the DFNAs and CFSAs and First Nations served by CFSAs met to detail what factors are important in the role of the Band Designate and today we have Karen English, Director of the Piikani Child and Family Services, and Lonnie Slezina, CEO of Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services Authority. So I'll turn it over to you just to go over a bit more detail on the Band Designate and what you have been working on over the last several months.

### Karen English, Director, Piikani Child and Family Services

First of all, I'd like to give thanks to Elder Eva Cardinal for your amazing prayer this morning, especially emphasizing the importance of us working together. Thank you so much. I would also like to acknowledge any other Elders that have joined us today.

### Lonnie Slezina, CEO, Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services Authority

And thank you to the Honourable Yvonne Fritz for giving us this opportunity to present to you today.

### Karen English

I also want to acknowledge the Chiefs and Grand Chief Noskey who are here today and Minister and all of our Chairs that are here.

### Lonnie Slezina

So as Steve said, we had several meetings to come together to develop a process that we think will be helpful for us to better work together. We met on March 23<sup>rd</sup> ... DFNA directors, First Nations receiving services from CFSAs, CEOs of CFSAs and Aboriginal Initiatives staff, to continue discussions of the role of the Designate. And I also want to acknowledge Jennifer who has been part of organizing this as well.

Between March 23<sup>rd</sup> and May 11<sup>th</sup>, we split off into our Treaty areas, and we were able to have some meetings to discuss what we thought the role of the Band Designate should look like, so we could bring it back on May 11<sup>th</sup> to conclude our discussions. During our meetings, we also had Elders in attendance, which was very helpful to us.

### Karen English

Also, because of our meetings together, we feel we now have a clear process to ensure meaningful involvement of the Designate in case planning for a First Nations child. We also have clarification and understanding of the role of the Designates; ways in which the CFSAs and a Designate might assist one another in fulfilling their responsibilities with respect to the



Lonnie Slezina and Karen English

## Band Designate

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legislation; actions required so that a Designate and CFSA staff have the tools to be effective in carrying out their responsibilities.

### Lonnie Slezina

Again, as Karen and I move through today, we will show you, and we would like you to share in our vision, how we would like to go forward with this position. We're building on the Band Designate role. There's some good things happening but we want to build on that. But I think, most of all, what you'll see out of our presentation today is that we really formed some strong relationships at our Treaty tables, and as a group. If you were to walk into the room and hear our discussions, you would see that we all share a similar vision, and we'll tell you about that today. As we go forward, we want you to know that this vision is really about preventing children from coming into care or losing their culture and their identity.

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... one of the things that we have been able to do as a partnership in collaboration with Region 1 is to engage prior to investigation, which has prevented a lot of our children from actually going into care.

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### Karen English

And please note, and keep in mind, that all the DFNAs of the region, and the CFSAs throughout Alberta, have agreed on these guiding principles:\*

- 1 The best interest of the child is paramount at all times.
- 2 First Nations children belong to their First Nations communities.

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\* See Appendix 2

- 3 Accepting and respecting that the child's connection to family and community and culture is essential to the child's sense of identity.
- 4 Trust, faith, and heart form the foundation of working together in the best interests of the child. ... And when we talk about working together, the example I'd like to elaborate on is the relationship that Piikani Child and Family Services has with Region 1 Authorities, and how we work together, and this has been a paramount piece to the Band Designate role. ...
- 5 Engaging families early in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard in the case planning for the child. ... For example, one of the things that we have been able to do as a partnership in collaboration with Region 1 is to engage prior to investigation, which has prevented a lot of our children from actually going into care. So we've been able to establish that relationship to prevent our children from being in care, and to find them a safe place to go either to grandparents or homes where they are with their families. ...
- 6 Representing and promoting the Treaty rights and culture of the First Nations child.
- 7 Acknowledging the importance of collective rights in Aboriginal communities. ... So understanding that in the legislation they talk a lot about the child, but one of the things that we forget to talk about is the family rights of a community, a First Nations community, and to ensuring that that child has those rights. ...
- 8 Balancing individual and collective rights so that the best interest of the child is placed first.

### Lonnie Slezina

Relationship building ... again, this is the key to our success. I think I've heard that many times today, certainly in this room. And with our building of

## Relationship building ... this is the key to our success.

relationships, in our meetings already we've seen success at our tables. Again, part of that is demonstrating respect for each other's roles and responsibilities. We were going about business not really understanding what each other was doing, and going in opposite directions. And then we would collide. We'd get frustrated with each other because we thought, "You should be doing this, or you should be doing that." So it caused friction. By getting to know each other and learning each other's roles and respecting them, that builds up trust, and that's where we're going. We're really building a sense of trust that we're all here for the same reason.

We want to explore ways that the Designate and the CFSAs can build stronger relationships through activities, such as meeting regularly, which we will continue to do. And training together ... we even talked about mentoring, and having more open discussions. I really feel that with being in the CFSA, that I can't do this alone. I'm a non-Aboriginal person. I cannot do this alone. I need Karen, and I need everyone else to help me with that. And we need to do it together or it's never going to change.

## The Designate is a liaison between two cultures and this person really needs to juggle that view and to feel comfortable in both cultures to pull us together.

Develop effective information sharing and communication processes ... we've had lots of discussion around this.

Again, there's been some problems around how we share information. You certainly can't plan well for families if you're not able to talk about what's going on for them. But we also recognize that you have to keep confidentiality in those sorts of matters to respect the family.

Responsibility ... so again, the case planning pathways to connection and planning for advocacy ... again, we want the First Nations Band Designate role to really ensure and coordinate connection between the family, the child, and the First Nation. CFSAs can't do this in those cases. We need that help. We need someone in that community to help us with that; and that's that support liaison. The Designate is a liaison between two cultures and this person really needs to juggle that view and to feel comfortable in both cultures to pull

## By getting to know each other, and learning each other's roles and respecting them, that builds up trust, and that's where we're going.

us together.

I spoke briefly about confidentiality. Information sharing is really critical but, at the same time, we need to ensure the Designate is aware of what they can and cannot share and how they work with the CFSAs.

Knowledge ... this person has to have all kinds of knowledge. They're a kind of Jack-of-all-trades. They need to ensure that they understand the cultural traditions of each child's community. We talk lots about historical knowledge of the families within the community through those plans. Who are the extended family members that we can reach out to? And we talked a lot about on the reserve, the Band

## Band Designate

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Designate being very aware of those family connections which really helps us do our work.

The Designate has to have knowledge of protocols, Treaty Rights, legislation, policy and practice.

Skills and abilities ... they need to be able to communicate effectively, be aware of a wide-range of people. They're dealing with all of us: CFSAs, DFNAs, Chiefs, families, community partners; so they have to be able to network with all those people. Caregivers are critical. The Designate has to have the ability to build relationships and to address conflict.

Qualifications ... we felt that this person needs to be similar to a caseworker, so they need related academic qualifications or related skills and training or experience.

Training ... training would include what is their job as the role of a Designate. And training, again, very important on the Act and legislation. We are finding some Band Designates who are going out to do the work and they didn't have any of this training. They don't know what the Act means, and so they get into conflict with the caseworker. This caseworker was following policy and procedure and the Designate wanted to come and do something different, not understanding how those tools were to be used.

### Karen English

Okay, now we're coming to the next steps. They are Legislation, Policy, Definitions:\*

- 1 Ensure confidentiality provisions with the Designate.
- 2 Identify key components of a cultural plan.
- 3 Obtain consent and access to information.
- 4 Review the current legislation to ensure that Designates and CFSAs staff have the ability to perform the duties required of their position.

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\* See Appendix 2

### Lonnie Slezina

We work as a team. We can flip-flop back and forth, and that's what it's about, right. So information management ... I'll just go through this really quickly. There's ways that we can really be accountable as well.

Information Management:

- Modifying our information system, ISIS, to have a checkbox recording that the Designate has been engaged. That's really important because sometimes a step gets missed in the heat of the action and so that's one way that we can be following up.
- Update the Designate list and upload it onto WorkLinks so we know who those Designates are out there.
- Move the First Nations tab from a side bar to the top bar in the WorkLinks.
- Implement a process to ensure the Designate list is kept current.

### Honourable Yvonne Fritz

How long would that take?

### Lonnie Slezina

To move that box from the side bar ... I think that they've already looked at making some adjustments with this, right, Fred, and so I think it's easily done.

### Fred Anderson, Director, Aboriginal Initiatives

They are working on that as we speak.

### Karen English

Continuing now on our next steps. Training and information sharing.

- 1 We need to communicate the importance and role of the Designate to Chief and Councils and

## We need to communicate the importance and role of the Designate to Chief and Councils and the requirements for the Designate to be qualified for the position.

the requirements for the Designate to be qualified for the position. ... Interestingly, we looked at it regionally and we've noticed that so many people's perceptions are so different when it comes to the Designates. We have some Designates that are delegated workers. We have some Designates that are actually part of the Band Council; they double in those roles. So part of this process is to ensure that we create a similar foundation so that we're all doing similar kinds of work in regards to information sharing and training.

- 2 We also want to look at developing a handbook or a guide regarding the role of the Designate and the CFSA; prepare a pamphlet on the role of Designate for distribution to the children, youth, parents, and others so that all in the community understand what the Designate role is.
- 3 We also would like to hold information sessions and orientations for our Chief and Councils so that they're always educated in regards to the importance of the Band Designate.
- 4 Prepare a pamphlet for distribution to children and parents.

### Lonnie Slezina

- 5 We need to provide ongoing training to the CFSA and DFNA staff and to Designates that clarify the role of the Designate and how to engage the Designate. I just label it responsibility and how to obtain informed consents.
- 6 We need to offer cultural competency training. ... You'll hear more about that as well today for both DFNA and CFSA staff. And again, that goes back

to that whole idea that we should be doing that together and learning from one another, so a lot of job shadowing and some joint training. We had lots of discussion on that. ...

- 7 We need to have ongoing training for caregivers on the role of the Designate.
- 8 Provide training at the leadership level in the Ministry, including senior managers, executives, supervisors and CEOs. Our thought is that as people move on, whether that's Chiefs, or it could be a manager, a caseworker.

If we're not up on our training and educating people on the role, we're going to lose our momentum and we think that's what happened over the years. The Band Designate role was put into legislation. We kind of took a stab at what that should look like but no one really had a solid foundation of how we kept each other informed. And so it's critical right from the leaders down to the caseworkers that we know what this role is because that would be the success.



Brian Hjesvold

## Band Designate

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### Karen English

We also looked at the need to develop a business case regarding the funding role of the Designate. Currently, this Designate role has been in the legislation for quite a while but there's never been any kind of resourcing or funding for this position and it's had to come out of the DFNA INAC funding. So with this in mind, we want to be able to include the training needs for this position. For example, on behalf of Piikani First Nation, we have one Band Designate. She shares the role as the foster care coordinator. So she's got two full-time positions at this point. She's done an amazing job being able to play that Band Designate piece but there could be so much more in that area in regards to the work that we can do.

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... we need to get more preventive.  
We'd like to have the Band Designate  
right at the front door so an  
apprehension doesn't even occur.

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### Lonnie Slezina

We're looking for and seeking your support on this. Earlier on, Nico spoke to that this morning ... that we deal with crisis and usually the Band Designate gets involved when the child is already apprehended. Everything's in crisis, so we're dealing with the Band and it's hard to do really effective work with the families at that point.

What we're hoping, and what we've talked about in our Treaty areas and all agree, we need to get more preventive. We'd like to have the Band Designate right at the front door so an apprehension doesn't even occur. It's a nice transition to grandma, grandpa, auntie, so

that we're not moving into this whole process, and then ending up with children that are in care for years to come. So we need to do that front-end work.

When Karen talks about ... she has to utilize one of her staff in dual roles, it's difficult for them to take the call, although she does and we'll call and she'll know who grandma is and so we know it's effective.

We're asking for your support today to be able to even take this role a little bit further where it really needs to be, and that's the front-end, to prevent children coming into care. It's going to ensure that their culture is preserved and that they're connected to the family and their Band. That's our vision. That's our goal, and we all share it together. I'm sure you do too. We just need your support and help to move further in that direction. Thank you.

### Honourable Yvonne Fritz

Well done!

### Steve MacDonald

Thank you very much, Karen and Lonnie. What I want to also say is that Karen and Lonnie are up here but you can be confident that the relationship, respect and trust that they demonstrate is demonstrated across all the Treaty areas and all the CFSAs. The Minister at one time said to me, "Steve, our job is to lay some golden bricks because our careers in the Ministry are short lived." And to me what you see in Karen and Lonnie is the strength of the partnership and some of the golden bricks. That's what's going to take us on the path to success for our kids and families. You did a great job reflecting what I saw around the tables last month from all the Regions and from all the CFSAs and Treaty areas. Great work!

We do have some time for some questions.



## Charlene Houle-White, Chairperson, Saddle Lake Wha-Koh-To-Win Child Care Society

Thank you. Where I come from, we talk about this Band Designate role all the time. And I appreciate the work that's happening at the provincial level but this is our story. What happens with us is a lot of our children are away from our families so they're living in the urban centres. And we're having cases where we want to bring them home or at least we want to know when they went into care and what's happening. The reality for us in Saddle Lake is we don't know when our children are being picked up. And our Elders back home, they tell us, "Those are our children. It's our responsibility. We'll take care of our own." And this is the struggle that we continually have with this Band Designate role.

We are Treaty people. When you start to talk about the Treaties, we move into a different jurisdiction. And we talk about jurisdiction also and we feel that this country is our territory right across. There's no boundaries for our people back home. So when we want to go to Ontario to go and get one of our children, we want to go and get them, but legally we cannot do that for many reasons.

The other thing is when we have ... like about a month ago my first cousin passed away. Her children were in care. And when we brought her home ... this is her story. She tried to sober up, she cleaned up for two years, her and her partner. They changed their life. They wanted their children back. She wanted her children. They were technically her children. They had one together who was in care. She wanted her babies back but somehow she didn't get them back. So she

... We want this role to be real  
and to be important.

went back to that life of ... the drug life and I mean hard core drug life, and so did her partner. He stayed stronger longer than she did but she ended up in the hospital and eventually she died. When we brought her sons home, her beautiful, handsome sons, they were so lost. It was even more tragic to see that because this is what's happening in our territory. We're bringing home our kids to bury their parents.

And so we pressured our so-called Band Designate to go out there and to find out what's happening with those boys. We're limited. As soon as we cross into another town, another city, you have ... you talk about the confidentiality. There's a lot of ... we're getting lost in a lot of the policies and the provincial standards. As a result, our families are still breaking down at a severe level, and what's happening is we're losing them. They're going into the system and we're not getting them back.



Patricia Cochrane and Kate Wood

Our people want a Band Designate but we don't want window dressing or lip service. We've done that long enough. We're smart enough and we know what we want and we want to bring our children home. Our Council is very aware of what a Band Designate is. We've discussed this matter. And what we want is we want a Band Designate that can go into these offices, and no matter what, even if it's a social worker who just started their job, they need to call us when they've apprehended a Treaty child.

## Band Designate

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I see it up there. You know we're talking Treaty and when we talk Treaty, we have to really talk Treaty because our people are Treaty. I respect the First Nations that don't have the Treaty status, but our people do and there's a difference there for us.

We want those roles to be funded. We want that extra support say, for example, for my cousin. That's only one story of many. This happens all the time. We're not getting our children back. When they come back 12, 11 years later ... two years a child will change. You'll lose that child. I've seen it. I teach. I'm a teacher. I know what goes on with kids. You keep disappointing a child, and you keep disappointing a child, of course, they're going to want to forget who you are.

We've brought people home. We've brought our kids home and we've had success stories. I took a child from the streets of Edmonton who was 12 years old and I raised her. I know we can do it. You can give them back their identity.

So that's why, when we were sent ... that's what our message is ... to tell what we want, and we want this role to be real and to be important.

### **James Ahnassay, Chief of Dene Tha' First Nation and Vice-Chair, North Peace Tribal Council Child and Family Services**

Thank you. Good morning to everyone.

The Band Designate position actually started way back in the early 1990s because as a Council any time there's a Children's Services matter we need to deal with it in a constitutional environment and we have to make an appointment with the Council meetings. And a lot of times issues are covered constantly. So it created sort of a bottle-neck type situation for important matters and this issue couldn't be dealt with right away.

We decided it would be a good idea to have a person who would be a designated person, just a one-stop shop

kind of approach, even to the point of passing through the courts to having joint custody of a child in care who has become a temporary or even a permanent guardianship order. The reason for us in doing that ... having to do that ... was that we wanted to have a lot more say in what is going to happen to the child.

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**We decided it would be a good idea to have a person who would be a designated person, just a one-stop shop kind of approach ... And the reason for us in doing that ... was that we wanted to have a lot more say in what is going to happen to the child.**

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But before we moved any further, too much further to court proceedings, Alberta, at that time, decided that we needed something that could be moved forward and create something and have recognition on both sides. I think the whole idea behind that was we needed a person that would be designated so that it doesn't take a whole lot of time to deal with Children's Services matters. And the person would be a person that knows inside and out, so to speak, the training in Children's Services. That really helped us in streamlining how we deal with Children's Services matters.

As time went by we created a designated position and that person looks after consultation with the parties. In our case, the worker, at least on a quarterly basis, she reviews Region 8 and Region 6 and even in the Calgary area too, depending on where the children are actually picked up and kept in care. That kind of process really helps us because the person that is dealing with that certain case is able to gather a lot of information, has good knowledge, good background and then when

there's a requirement for the matter to go to Council, then she lets us know ahead of time. And she presents the case and a lot of times it has to go from the permanency plan in place or the most important piece where a child doesn't really have a choice but to be considered for adoption. Then a discussion would take place and Council would consider any further avenue that possibly can be considered for that process.

In addition to that, it really helps us ... we also introduced the idea of having an MOU that would be struck up between the caregiver ... and on the permanency plan ... those caregivers, CFSAs or DFNAs and ourselves so that we have certain understandings in terms of cultural ties, family ties and some support and if at all possible, in future, to return the child to the family of origin.

So we look at the designated position really seriously. It is something that is new. At the First Nations level there's a lot of families that don't fully understand Children's Services regulations and legislation and want to involve a lawyer and it becomes a costly thing. So better to inform ... make the families aware through the Designate as to what their rights are, what they should be doing, help them to negotiate in terms of, I guess, arrangements, so the child can be returned to the family of origin. And sometimes when that's not possible then there are other safeguards we can determine through that position.

So it is a really important position and it takes a lot of work, full time for larger First Nations. For smaller First Nations, then it's more difficult to hire one person. It's tough. Two First Nations could agree they could share ... something like that. So, those are different options. But for larger First Nations, especially if there are large case files, then there is a definite need for a Designate to look after that position.

And also, there's a restriction when it comes to on-reserve apprehensions; there's consultation. If it's off-reserve, the legislation says the parent of origin

**There is a need also for a First Nations to be notified any time there's a child apprehended off the reserve, similar to being on reserve ...**

must consent. But in a lot of cases ... what happens in a lot of cases is that at some point down the road we find that a caseworker tends to have discouraged parents from contacting the First Nations, some saying they don't have to be involved. Later down the road we find out that they did want to be involved or involve the First Nation because the family alone on reserve doesn't really have too many resources to go to. So at the end, they find out they want us involved so that we can advocate for them. And that part needs to also be revisited because it doesn't work quite well for First Nations, especially the children that they are taking from the parents.

**I think everybody that needs to be involved in case files ought to be accredited ...**

There is a need also for a First Nations to be notified any time there's a child apprehended off the reserve, similar to being on reserve, particularly with TGOs and PGOs when they come to that status.

Something that we also find is that there's assumptions being made in certain case management and also decisions, and not based on fact. Sometimes I'm not sure whether it's because of workers having so many files. Whatever the case may be, I think everybody that needs to be involved in case files ought to be accredited, just the way the legislation requires, or some of you call it social worker, they have to be registered with the association. But what we find is that even in other

## Band Designate

agencies ... not all workers are accredited. I think everybody that works in Children Services ought to become accountable to that accreditation. And that should be reviewed too.

And lastly, the other point I wanted to raise is that there's a lot of risk overall in case file review. Maybe there's not enough case file review quality assurance type people to help agencies who need to double check on housing, and case management. So thank you.

### Ernest Wesley, Chief of Wesley First Nation

Good morning. I also want to thank the Elder who gave the invocation. And in her prayer, she taught us that prayer is a natural phenomenon that goes with being a human being. As you meet difficult obstacles on a path that you are travelling on, you automatically resort to yourself and in fact, you try and figure out how to overcome that obstacle. When the obstacle gets difficult, then you know that there's a greater power, and if you can connect with the greater power, that will help you get out of the situation you're in.

And as I sit here, it takes me back to 1993, '80s, '70s, and when I speak like this at Chiefs' assemblies, some of my colleagues tend to wonder. They wonder how old is that guy that's speaking. I could say that I'll probably be the third First Nations in Alberta that grandfathered a tripartite agreement. And I could say that I was part of the government-to-government relationship that we signed. And I could talk about the days of the residential schools, and why we're here today. And I could talk about the day that we were allowed to go into the drinking establishments in the '60s. And I could relate to the days that we were allowed to vote in federal elections. And I could go back and say, '69, '70s, Indian Association. That was the voice at that time for Aboriginal people in Alberta, and one of the cries was that we need to repatriate our children from overseas into our community, and across the ocean, the Atlantic ocean repatriation. I'm glad to hear today

that we've come a long way since the time I signed the government-to-government relationship. But the only reason why I did it at that time was because of the Child Welfare Act. In the Child Welfare Act ... it said that when a child is apprehended, the first one that they notify is the Chief of that community. So we have come a long ways it seems.



Julia Cardinal and Tracy CzuyMcKinnon

I know that one of our cousin communities in southern Alberta today, Treaty 7, is on the verge of what I signed back in 1993, within that tripartite agreement. What we signed there was one day that we, as First Nations people, have our own Child Welfare Act. And I know that the Blood Tribe has been working on it, and they're almost there, I hear; but I know the difficulties they're running into. The levels of government within the Dominion of Canada ... where do we sit, First Nations governments? We should be equal partners with the federal government in governing the Dominion according to the Treaties. So when you look at that, what sort of power are we willing to share with the Chiefs, the government, First Nations, provincial government? Where are we?

In fact, when I signed the 1993 tripartite agreement, this is why we signed within our community. See, we are a unique community, the Stony Nakoda Tribe, and we are a band of the great Sioux Nation. We have cousins just over here, Alexis and Paul Band because we have a vast territory, but within our community

we have three governments with no boundaries. Maybe that's one of the reasons why I don't know how many times the provincial government has been in our territory to look at our agencies, child welfare agencies. And I don't know how many times they started to fix it, top down. And I don't know how many times they tried education. So that's a unique government-to-government relationship we're experiencing at the moment, but we always overcome when there's a problem through prayers, like the Elder said this morning.

The reason why we signed that in the '70s, we were the wealthiest First Nations in Alberta in terms of natural resource development like oil and gas.

And then prior to the '90s, colonization mentality, I guess, that's incorporated in our minds, which is the difficulty of understanding the dollar, the saving part, the budgeting part, of the larger society and those dollars. It's different as to our belief system, which is a shared concept of a dollar.

So we look at those ... one of the Chiefs, my colleague, came up with this: "Hey Chief, I'm having problems funding our own child welfare system." We funded our own child welfare system. I'm sure that other First Nations like Hobbema that are blessed with resources are funding it. And the Chief said to me, "Hey Chief, the populations within my First Nation ... that was the Chiniki ... and our dollars isn't enough. It's getting to a point where I cannot help the grandparent that's taking care of that child, raising that child. I cannot support with the resources." Remember that, you people that are working in the social services.

Grandparents, I guess, is who we should be looking at in our communities, and he said that grandparents had a relationship to bring that child up. But then you have to quantify grandparents today. He said, "We're all colonized in a culture that is missionized." And I said, "Okay. There's this new program, tripartite agreement. The federal government has got the dollars under

Treaty Rights." And we were yelling loud enough to tell him that we want to repatriate our children back into our communities. Here's the dollars, but do you have a Child Welfare Act that we can let you have those dollars. Well, in my mind, we did, but it had to be written, and legislated, and approved by another government. And our laws are oral. And then we had to transcribe it into English language.

I think I'm speaking ahead of the agenda, but I thought maybe this was the right time to say my piece, and I haven't even read the Memorandum of Understanding on this process because I took a break from politics for four years and now I'm back. I've been in it for a long time as you can hear on the history of child welfare and my interpretation of what child welfare is.

I think the next big task for us as Chiefs of Alberta and our Minister of Alberta Child and Family is to say to each other, "How far are we going to allow each other to develop our own legislation and how are we going to look at those? Are we going to look at it on Treaty, Métis, registered." I mean, those aren't my language, but I have to use that to describe how we were numbered, the First Nations people were numbered in Canada. I have a Treaty number. The number system ... that takes me back to the nativity scene of Christians. Mary and Joseph where were they going? And on the way they bore a child named Jesus. So the number system has come a long way.



Koren Lightning-Earle

## Band Designate

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So in that sense I hope that when we do ... and whoever it is that's going to come before the Chiefs' Assembly, recognize that some First Nations child welfare act and how we could help each other develop that, that we can take control of our own destiny because we know we've got problems. Thank you.

### Arthur Noskey, Grand Chief of Treaty 8 and Chair, Kee Tas Kee Now Child and Family Services

I do apologize to those that are sitting around the table. On Tuesday, we had a meeting here with the Premier and the Minister and I got my notes reversed there. I said that the Northland review, what I meant to say was the Northland review wasn't a part of the annual review or Protocol Agreement. I had that backwards; I apologize. I said that backwards. Basically it wasn't a part of the Protocol Agreement, so, I have to apologize to Maria David-Evans and Chiefs that were there.

And in saying that, I was kind of leaning forward in anticipation of my colleague and friend here talking about the path. I thought he was going to mention what Columbus was wearing when he discovered America.

Anyways, in saying that I'd like to share a small story here. Back home this past weekend, I'd given this 10 year old kid a ride to go pick up an eight year old buddy to come and play with him, come visit for the day. So I took him over and on the way back as the eight year old was getting out of my truck, he said, "It's really hard to have a girlfriend." And the 10 year old said, "No, it's not. Having a girlfriend is a good thing, a nice thing." And the eight year old says, "No, it's not because they just tell you what to do."

In saying that, the Band Designate role, if there is an opportunity out there or anything that hints of an opportunity to basically better enhance or optimize our child welfare services, then we should look into it seriously. In saying that, I know it's not only in

First Nations country and family in general where ... from the family structure and the bonds of different families, that's where our children learn. Our boys learn from their mother best how to treat their wives and girlfriends and the same thing with the daughter from the father. And those are, you know, when you go back to the residential school, those are the things that are ripped out of First Nations homes. I think we're still seeing the residual effects of that. So whatever the process is, the quickest way to come back there, I'm all for it. I'll support it.

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... the Band Designate role, if there is an opportunity out there or anything that hints of an opportunity to basically better enhance or optimize our child welfare services, then we should look into it seriously.

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And as far as the MOU too in child welfare, you know, there's times where a First Nation leader will say, "Well, we need to consult with our people." Well, I'm on my eighth year as the Chief of our Nation. I've served as a politician for our community for the last 16 years. Our members have been saying, "You need to find those children and bring them back." So the MOU is basically kind of like a process to do that. Now I have to go consult with my people when for the last 16 years they have been telling me to do that? However we can unite our efforts and move forward to better care for our children, I'm all for it.

The issue we face more so in my community, as in many First Nations, is finding homes, foster care homes or kinship homes for children. And the first thing is most of the families there have both parents working. So the question I have is: Is the cost of living too high where

it requires that both parents to work now or is it the luxury of income? We have a daycare centre and I know the daycare centre basically has ... 60 per cent of those kids in the daycare ... their parents are not working and we initially opened it to assist the parents that do work.

So those are questions maybe in having a community designate report that information. In saying that, what are the best practices of care? I don't think we're fossilized where we won't look at the best practice that works somewhere else. I don't think that.

So, in saying that, thank you. And I might not be here this afternoon. But, it's always a privilege and an honour to be a part of this. And also, the participation when it comes to our youth, it's very encouraging and comforting to know that they are in good hands. Thank you.

## Steve MacDonald

Thank you very much, Chief, for those words. Again, thank you to Lonni and Karen for their presentation on the Band Designate. I think we heard there are challenges with jurisdiction, training and resources. I think we also heard we need to get on with it. There was a lot of work done by directors, CEOs, and all the teams who came together to set the stage on what needs to be done and to get on with it. And the next question was, "How soon?" So, we've got the direction and we're on the right path. Let's get it done and we will report back to this group on the progress we make.

## Luncheon Address

### Introduction of Honourable Verlyn Olson: Honourable Yvonne Fritz

I'm sorry to interrupt your lunch today. I'm going to begin our program because I know we were running a little bit late. Our guest speaker today, the Honourable Verlyn Olson, has a very important commitment in his constituency. It's the hundredth anniversary for the university there, so it's pretty important that he be there. Verlyn, we're absolutely delighted that you are here.

As you know, the Honourable Verlyn Olson is the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General. He was first elected to our Legislature in 2008 and appointed to Cabinet in February of this year. That was a good thing for all of us when you were appointed, Verlyn.



Hon. Verlyn Olson and Hon. Yvonne Fritz

I know you're loving it and we're loving having you in Cabinet. His extensive portfolio includes coordination of the Safe Communities initiative. That's a project that some of you may be familiar with because it brings together our provincial and municipal governments, our law enforcement agencies, our community groups, business sectors, and social agencies to strengthen communities and to ensure that Alberta remains a place where we want to live and raise our children.

I can tell you that Verlyn, in the short time that he's been in the portfolio, has really lifted things up for us in Children and Youth Services, especially with

the contributions that you've made for millions of dollars through Safe Communities already, whether it's emergency care, a number of youth initiatives that have been funded ... and we appreciate it immensely.

Verlyn is going to bring a unique perspective to our discussions today. If I recall right, he served as the Chair of the MLA committee on the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Workforce Planning Initiative which has been very well received and some of you may know about that. The committee's report ... I remember when it came through Cabinet just recently, Verlyn ... the committee's report, *Connecting the Dots - Aboriginal Workforce and Economic Development in Alberta* that was recently released on May 6<sup>th</sup> of this year by the Minister of Employment and Immigration, the Honourable Tom Lukaszuk. I hope you don't mind, Verlyn, but I thought I would quote from the report. When I wrote this I just really wanted to share it with people because I know how hard you work. I know the late nights in session, then you'd be going way out into the communities throughout Alberta to gather information. And you took that information and made a profound difference to that report.

So in the report ... and this is quoting the Minister ... at the beginning of the report, Verlyn wrote:

*Speaking personally, I can say that my time on this committee has been a great education for me. It taught me more about the rich history and tradition of Aboriginal people and of the struggles that have roots which are centuries old. It also taught me that there are many good news stories that few ever hear about. And there's unlimited potential in the fastest growing and youngest segment of Alberta's population. We have learned that each community is unique, with its own strengths and its own challenges. And my sense is the dialogue about these issues is sometimes hampered by flawed assumptions, suspicion, and frustrations. One of the challenges for anyone working in this area is to ensure they are armed with facts and reliable data as opposed to stereotypes.*



Verlyn, you've shown you're very passionate on behalf of Aboriginal people and this has carried on through the money you've dedicated to our Aboriginal children and youth and to the good service that we have through Safe Communities. We're all looking forward to your thoughts on what you'd like to share with us today.

So thank you for taking the time to be here. I know your day has been incredibly busy and still will be, but we're looking forward to hearing you. Let's give him a big hand.

### Honourable Verlyn Olson, Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Wow, I'm a little bit intimidated by that introduction. Well, thank you very much, Yvonne, for the introduction.

And I should try to say a word or two of Cree ... so I'll apologize ahead of time, but *tansi* ... and I actually at one time, once or twice, I have actually spoken even a sentence or two, but there would be ripples of laughter go through the room so I've maybe gotten a little bit more careful. But I'm out of practice a little bit since being away from the committee that Yvonne referred to. That's actually one of the things I would still like to do ... is learn Cree. It would be a wonderful, wonderful thing to do.

I'm here today to greet you, and I want to greet you on behalf of Premier Stelmach in particular, and all of my colleagues at the Legislature. And I want to offer a special greeting to our two Elders who are here, and to all the Chiefs, some of whom I've met before. I'm very pleased to be here and also to acknowledge that we're here on Treaty 6 territory.

Thank you for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to speak a little bit about what my department does and how its activities may overlap with much of the work that you do.

I want to start by commending you, Minister Fritz, on this initiative. I think it's just a wonderful thing that you're doing here. Everybody in this room I know shares a passion and a commitment to our young children, our greatest natural resource. So it's really good that we can be here together. I just wish that I could have spent the day with you but, unfortunately, I came from Camrose and I have to turn around and go back right away.

I know that the Premier feels that our young people are a great resource and they have to be our priority. That's one of the reasons, I think, that he mandated this Communities initiative. I really feel like I'm the beneficiary of much hard work done by those who went before me in this department. I've really only been the Minister in this department for about three months. I describe the pace that I'm moving at these days to trying to drink water from a fire hose. It's intense and lots of worrying to do, but I can certainly see the great groundwork that's being done by many people.

Starting with the Premier's initiative back in 2006, he sent a task force around the Province and we asked the communities, "What's important to you?" And there was a very strong message that people want to feel safe in their communities. That's what led to the creation of this Safe Communities initiative.

The Justice Department is the lead ministry, but there are eight other government departments that are involved in this initiative. That's very significant for a couple of reasons: One is just getting eight departments to work together. It's a great example, I think, of what governments should be trying to do, so we don't end up siloing and have different departments off doing

**We have to make our young people  
safe and we have to position them to  
succeed in their lives.**

## Luncheon Address

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different things that are working in parallel but they're not talking to each other. This signifies a broad approach taken by government to incorporate their perspectives from several different departments, but it's a good way also of targeting the underlying causes of crime. Our Solicitor General is fond of saying ... and I really agree with him .... that he can't arrest his way out of a crime problem. It's much more fundamental than that. If we're going to have safe communities, we have to intervene at a very early stage and that's what brings us to our young people. We have to make our young people safe and we have to position them to succeed in their lives. That's true of all Albertans. I think that it was a really great initiative started by the Premier that has been continued and will be continuing.

This represents a significant shift in government policy, I would say. And just a few weeks ago the Premier announced the roll-out of what's called the Crime Prevention Framework and it, again, talks about this holistic approach where, yes, you have to be tough on crime. That's still there and we're beefing that up too, but at the same time, we're talking a lot more about early intervention and prevention.

This is not something that any one group or stakeholder group can do on its own, and it's also not something that a government is going to be able to do to, or for, a community. It very much has to be a partnership of everybody involved. Everybody has a role to play whether it's individuals, communities, various levels of government, non-profit organizations, businesses. Everybody has a role to play. Restoring communities is not going to occur overnight. This is very much a long range type of a plan. As I said, it requires a collaboration of government, Aboriginal communities, and all other organizations in order to succeed.

Now, the realization that this was a valid approach led then to the obvious which is, we need to empower local groups, the people who are working at the grassroots, to play a major role in early intervention, prevention, and creating safe communities. That's where probably a

lot of you come in because you are the front-line people, the people who work with front-line people and guide them. And so without that essential element ... it doesn't really matter how much money government is going to spend ... I think it's probably doomed to failure.

These early interventions could be something that could be subtle. It's a long-range type of an approach and in many ways is probably subtle. If you had, say, a young mother who you were able to help with any number of things, support her in one way or another, that ripple effect will be positive for her children, her family, her community, and it will pay great dividends. The research that I've been shown by my department, and probably all of you could quote, is that for every dollar you spend on these types of early interventions you are saving many, many dollars on things like incarceration, building jails, and enforcement and so on.

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I'll talk a little bit more specifically about some of the things that we're doing. I should first explain what the Safe Communities Innovation Fund is. The Safe Communities Task Force made a number of recommendations. One of the recommendations was to create a fund that would support innovative types of projects. We're into our third year now. This overall initiative of Safe Communities is about a \$500 million commitment of government. Part of it is a fund called the Safe Communities Innovation Fund which is \$60 million over three years. And think of the name, Innovation Fund. It's not necessarily meant just to

support the traditional types of things that might have been supported in the past. It's targeted at innovative ideas, out-of-the-box thinking that has a chance at making a difference. And it's also not meant to be there forever. It's an innovation fund, so it's there to support pilot projects. The idea would be that at some point there will be an analysis done of what worked and what didn't. Those things that are working the best are the most likely to be supported in the longer term.

To date, we've invested in 88 projects across the Province and it's about \$60 million. It increased supports of all kinds in all kinds of ways, but we've tried to target those people with the biggest risk factors. Aboriginal youth have challenges and risks that they face. And so since 2009, 30 of these projects have been targeted specifically with an Aboriginal focus for Aboriginal youth both on and off reserve. That represents an investment of about \$20 million, so about a third of the fund. And again, the idea is to try and get in early and create programs that reach youth in a way that will put them on a path towards success. We're obviously responding to issues like addictions, gangs, housing problems, education, poverty, family violence, cultural continuity, mental health, and so on.

I just want to say, on the issue of education, harking back to the report that Minister Fritz referred to, the *Connecting the Dots* Report, and by the way, if you're interested in seeing that report, I'd really encourage you to get a copy of it. It's available. You could contact any MLA and they should be able to get it for you. You can certainly contact my office, or Thomas Lukaszuk's office, Employment and Immigration, or Aboriginal Relations. They'll have copies. We made 31 recommendations in that report and 29 of the recommendations were accepted by the two Ministries who struck our committee, and the other two recommendations were accepted in principle. So they were all accepted, 29 of them outright, and two in principle. There is a very strong focus in that report on education, education of all kinds.

## "Education is our new buffalo."

And I know Patricia Littlechild from Maskwachees Collage in Hobbema ... one time when she and I were talking about education, which is something she's very passionate about, and she said something to me which probably many of you have heard many times. She said, "Education is our new buffalo." And I thought that was just a brilliant, brilliant comment. It pretty much says it all. And so education has got to be the focus with young people, together with all of the other things, but education, I feel very strongly after working on that report, is really the way of the future.



Elder Eva Cardinal, Loretta Bellerose and Elder Albert Black Water

When you look at the range and the complexity of issues that Aboriginal youth face, you can see why it might take nine different government departments to be involved. And you can see why that might be a good idea because they all have an area that they're focused on, that they've got some specialized knowledge about and it's a very good thing to have them working together. I've only been involved for about three months directly in this, but it's really great to see some of the initiatives that have been undertaken.

Events like you are having today are extremely important because it fits perfectly with the whole initiative of a multi-faceted approach, thinking outside

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the box, looking for innovation. And the people around the tables today certainly appear to me to be the types of people who would have the knowledge of what the need is and have some great ideas as to how to deal with those things.

But, talking isn't enough. I know government gets accused of that all the time. It's lots of talk and where's the action. And I have to say in my year and a half on the committee with Pearl Calahasen and Tony Vandermeer and Evan Berger travelling to many communities, I heard that comment more than once and I took it to heart. "You know, we've had guys like you come and you want to hear what we think and then you go away and we never hear from you again until they send the next guy out, usually a new guy, like you, who wants to know what we think." And so, we do want to know what people think, but there comes a time when it's time for action. And so my encouragement here is: Talking is good, but action is better. I think we're on the right track. And I'm sure you could name initiatives that represent action in the areas that you're working in.

I'm just going to mention a few of the initiatives that the Safe Communities has been involved in. Right here in Edmonton there's a program led by Native Counselling Services that's a partnership with the Edmonton Police Service. And I'll probably not pronounce this name right ... *Pobna* ... "Keepers of the Fire" ... and it draws on the Cree custom of the youth tending the fire during traditional ceremonies. So the great thing about it is it signifies to the youth that they have a unique role and they have a responsibility and they have value. It's an initiative that helps surround the youth. This is youth in the city, living in a city environment with supportive role models which, of course, is so important. It gives them a stronger sense of self-worth and that's probably fundamental to any success in working with young people, I would think.

Another great initiative is in Saddle Lake. I'm going to try to pronounce another one, *ka-na-way-me-nan* ...

which means, "keep us safe". Now the really significant thing about this program is that it's led by the Saddle Lake Boys and Girls Club. I understand that that Boys and Girls Club is the only on-reserve Boys and Girls Club in the Province. They're doing amazing work with children and families. And it's again, community driven which is so important ... building the community from the inside out, not somebody imposing from the outside.

I'm just going to read this little bit. It's described by the community leaders who are involved. Their approach is described as "restoring the relational circle for children and youth. It represent three strands in a braid: Partnerships with families and community, volunteerism and community engagement, and cultural continuity."

I really, really like the focus on volunteerism. I don't know if a person could really identify too many communities probably anywhere in the world that are successful and vibrant that have no volunteers. A strong volunteer base is one of the main building blocks of any successful community.

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**As far as cultural continuity, that's  
a very important protective factor for  
Aboriginal youth.**

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As far as cultural continuity, that's a very important protective factor for Aboriginal youth. This program strives to decrease the number of kids who are involved in gangs and being bullied and so on, and it has increased the social programming and leadership amongst teens. I know we've got Elders in the room, so this is maybe particularly significant in terms of Elders. It builds bridges between wisdom seekers and wisdom keepers. And again, it's all about that mentorship, the

positive role models and so on, another real key to success, I would suggest.

Another great initiative is the Stoney Music Factory which is a great example of an innovative program. And this is one that's operated by the Legacy Children's Foundation with the three Stoney First Nations. There's a similar project up in Bonnyville/Cold Lake. I have a son who has got a music degree and I know how important music is to him and his friends. Thinking outside the box ... what a great example of thinking outside the box ... getting kids involved in music. That's a real gift. There's mentoring involved at a really fundamental level. It's more than about the music. It's about the relationships that are built through the mentorship and the teaching. Obviously it teaches some great skills, but it goes far beyond that.

Now, there is a story ... I have a little story about a young girl who was involved in this program. And she was a girl who was very quiet, very shy, didn't engage with the people around her. But in getting involved in this music program, she found something that she was passionate about.

And that's another thing I'd just like to say. Mention was made at the hundredth anniversary of the university in Camrose and a good friend of mine was the president. I used to really like going to hear him talk to the incoming first-year students at the fall orientation because his advice to the students was, "Forget about what your parents told you in terms of what you needed to be. You know, you're going to be a teacher or a nurse, or a lawyer, whatever." And he said, "Forget about all of that and figure out for yourself what you have a passion for. Figure out what you love. And then learn everything you can about it; just totally immerse yourself in learning everything you can about it and you will make yourself successful. You'll be a success." And I would suggest, too, that being happy is probably the definition of success.

A program like this and the example of this young girl ... she found her passion, started to smile, open up, talk

to people. She's now attending regularly; she's got a positive outlook. And here's a quick little quote from her. She said:

*I like playing music. It's the only thing I like doing. I think if kids my age got to play lessons at school, they would come to school more. I am proud of playing music, guitar and piano, proud that I've got those skills. And after I'm done high school, I want to go to art school to learn art and music at the same time.*

These are the words of a person who's got hope and a positive outlook on life. That's something that's being done by the people in her community working with her and by the resources that are being provided. So, a great example of what we can accomplish together.

There are many, many other examples. I'm just going to refer to a few of them: Reclaiming Our Youth With Hope Program at the Montana First Nation; Stop Now and Plan or SNAP program at the Alexander First Nation; Eden Valley Youth Empowerment Project; Circle of Courage Youth Intervention Program at Kainai; and the Way-In Aboriginal Commitment Coach Project through Edmonton Public Schools are just a few of the many wonderful examples of community-based initiatives underway across the province.

You can see there are a number of these that are underway. They all take different approaches. It's not like a cookie-cutter where everybody gets the same thing. Not every community needs the same thing and that's one of the things we have to remember and that government has to remember, is that communities are unique. If you really believe that the wisdom of what's needed is in the communities, then you have to support those initiatives that come from the communities.

I would say that these types of initiatives can be life-changing for many young people. If youth have an alternative, a healthy alternative, they will walk away from some of the negative lifestyles that are maybe

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If youth have an alternative, a healthy alternative, they will walk away from some of the negative lifestyles that are maybe challenging and threatening them.

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challenging and threatening them. We can build on these successes and I think we've got some momentum.

I really want to pass on my appreciation to you for inviting me today to say a few words. And again, I want to thank you for what you are all doing. I think it's a really good sign that all the people who are here are committed to working together, to collaborating.

I want to say a special word, and I saved this to the end because I want this to be an exclamation mark. The Minister responsible for this event is ... I can't think of a better person to be doing this job. She's been a great mentor to me. Yvonne, you've been a great mentor to me. Yvonne is doing a job that I would suggest, even for those of us who aspire to be Cabinet Ministers, I'm not so sure how many of us would want to do

Yvonne's job because it, I think, is one of the toughest jobs in government – dealing with sad stories, heart-wrenching stories, yet keeping your chin up, staying positive. You're doing a wonderful job, Yvonne, and I'm glad to be a colleague of yours.

I am still pretty new at this. I have an appreciation for the effort that goes into initiatives like this though, and it makes me proud to be part of a government that is supporting these initiatives. I'm certainly committed to doing what I can in whatever job they give me in government to help the cause, and I know all of you have that same commitment. I look forward to hearing about your many successes and I want to wish you all the best. Thank you.

## Presentation to Minister Fritz

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### Sarah Potts, Co-Chair, Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority

To everything there is a season, and a time for purpose under heaven; a time to plant, a time to pluck up, a time to break down, a time to build up ... and that is what our Minister did a year ago when she convened an assembly of DFNA and CFSA governors. That has never happened before. Such a historic time and a time of change; and a time of opening doors that were never open before. She had the courage, took a brave step, a first step at the start of a journey of relationship building. Thank you, Minister, for what you've done.

### Theresa Bull, Chair, Akamkispatinaw Ohpikihawasowin Child and Family Services

I just want to say thank you for the wonderful work you've done on behalf of the DFNAs of Alberta.  
*Hai! Hai!*

### Honourable Yvonne Fritz

Thank you all very, very much. I hold you all closely in my heart and my soul. And I really want to thank each and every one of you for the good work that you do because you are on the road to success. And also, remember that my door is always open. We don't know what's going to happen in the fall, but the door is always open and I know that we talked about that a bit earlier this morning. I really want to thank our Deputy. Steve, thank you. Let's give Steve a big hand as well. Thank you again.

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Such a historic time and a time of change; and a time of opening doors that were never open before. She had the courage, took a brave step, a first step at the start of a journey of relationship building.

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Theresa Bull, Hon. Yvonne Fritz and Sarah Potts

## Cultural Training Review

### Steve MacDonald

I'm sure you all feel the same way I do ... there's something wrong about going overtime on a meeting on a Friday afternoon. We had great conversations this morning and it didn't make sense to try to cut those conversations short. What that does mean is that we need to make up a bit of time this afternoon. We did allocate a fair amount of time for the roundtable so I'm hoping we can make up some time around that because I'd really like to spend what time we have left going through the presentations and updates because I think they're very important.

One of the key actions that was initiated as a result of previous discussions was to review cultural training within the child intervention system. We all agreed that it is in the best interests of children, youth and families to ensure cultural understanding and that the supports and services provided are sensitive to culture. We undertook a review. Today I'm really pleased that we can hear about the results of that review, and also, more importantly, some of the recommendations that have come forward. To tell us more about the review and the findings and the recommendations for moving forward, we now have our Director of Aboriginal Initiatives, Fred Anderson and Joey Hamelin, Senior Manager of Aboriginal Initiatives. I'll turn it over to you now, Joey and Fred.



Steve MacDonald

### Fred Anderson, Director, Aboriginal Initiatives

Thank you very much, Deputy Steve McDonald. First of all, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Elder Eva Cardinal for the opening prayer this morning. It's such a wonderful way to start our meetings, to talk about the spirit and talk about culture and children. I really wanted to acknowledge her for doing that. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge Albert Blackwater, Elder from the Blood Tribe who is with us today. It's really an honour to have them here with us as we talk and listen to each other. My experience with both Elders in the Blood Tribe and Saddle Lake and other areas is the stress they put on the importance of children being connected, children needing to know who they are. It's about hope, their culture, and their roots.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge Grand Chief Noskey. I also want to acknowledge all of the Chiefs that are here today. It's important ... their leadership and commitment.

I also want to really take a moment to acknowledge our Minister, the Honourable Yvonne Fritz. I look back over the last year and see the tremendous amount of willingness to come together and develop working relationships, listen to one another, learn from one another. But more importantly, the Minister has been a steward, a leader, and so passionate about children. I had mentioned to her before she had to leave, from my heart and from the Ministry, we truly, truly acknowledge how she's engaged people. She's met with youth. She's met with people from all parts of Alberta to hear how things could be better, from leading the youth and helping leaders, Chiefs. And we've learned together as we've moved forward. And so from my perspective, our perspective, Joey and I, a true leader, inspirational, and really, really happy to be working with her. On that note, I'd like ... although she's not here, I wanted to thank her, in terms of her role as a leader.



The other leader that's important here is Mr. Steve McDonald. Steve has been a true leader as well. He's been working to get us together and it's for the benefit and for good outcomes for children. We really, truly appreciate all the hard work and commitment to the youth and children, Steve.

Also Mark Hattori, my boss, who is the project lead for this one that Joey and I are going to present on. I let Mark know every day he's a great boss.

I'm really proud to say that Joey and I are happy to report back since the November meeting and the June 17<sup>th</sup> meeting on what it is we learned and what it is we heard on the cultural training we do.

And the question is: Why the review? Well, in this very room, almost a year ago, June 17<sup>th</sup>, the direction was to take a look at this and then, in September, the CEOs, the DFNA directors and First Nations also put it forward very clearly that cultural training was needed.

In terms of the process, we felt we were very inclusive. We did a lot of good work in terms of meeting with people. We'll get into that a little bit more. In November last year, Broadview Applied Research was contracted to complete the review and to determine what training was currently provided, and to identify gaps between current programming, what key stakeholders wanted and what promising practices were out there. That's really important around the promising practices, and it's about demonstrating understanding and respect.

**Cultural safety occurs when the majority culture creates an environment that allows the minority culture to thrive.**

Cultural competency and cultural safety ... we can't say enough about this, because it's so important. It's so important. We heard the Elders say that today. We heard the Chiefs, Chief Laboucan, stress

the importance of culture and respect. Cultural competence is behaviours, attitudes and policies that allow us to work effectively within all walks of life and linguistic groups.

Cultural safety occurs when the majority culture creates an environment that allows the minority culture to thrive. Well, that means the smaller group of people that may be in that organization. Cultural competence creates cultural safety. People from minority cultures are able to thrive in a majority culture without losing their indigenous culture. Achieving a culturally competent system requires realigning behaviours, attitudes and practices with our policies and systems. What we learned is really key here because we learned that we need reflective practice, a practice that demonstrates true understanding, appreciation and respect for different world views, protocols and cultural traditions. We need cultural competency, knowing and valuing a different way of understanding the world. We need a cultural policy framework. We need training that is at the local community level that addresses the uniqueness of the respective community and protocols, and allows for a direct experience.

**Achieving a culturally competent system requires realigning behaviours, attitudes and practices with our policies and systems.**

And what we also learned was that our system ... we do provide delegation training for workers and staff, but it's considered by many to be the only ministry-sanctioned cultural training. However, the three day workshop that staff get really is an overview of governance structures, legal status of Aboriginal peoples, factors that may impact case work practice. Clearly, our delegation training is not cultural training.

## Cultural Training Review

### Joey Hamelin, Manager, Aboriginal Initiatives

Thank you, Fred. In this next section what we're going to share with you is what we heard. We travelled around the Province and probably spoke with well over 200 people. We spoke with Elders; we spoke with youth; we spoke with CFSAs, people from CFSAs, the CEOs, DFNA directors; then also with management, including the executive, which means our Deputy Minister and our Assistant Deputy Minister as well. We also interviewed and spoke with the Minister on this.

So just to give you ... so the voice that we heard from all of the people is what we're going to share with you now. What we heard was that culture is who we are; culture includes our beliefs, values and traditions. It's about identity. It's about our history since time immemorial. It's about spirituality. It's about language. It's about the natural laws. It's about connections with family and community, and culture is about the land.

From the Elders' voice, the Elders told us that prayer is culture; that life is about being gentle, and about loving and praying for our children, and sharing our traditional ceremonies from generation to generation, and recognizing the unique and distinct cultures of First Nations and Métis, of the respective communities and history, and, as well, humility and respect.



Joey Hamelin

When we look at the bridge ... and we heard that this morning ... the bridge between the wisdom keepers and the wisdom speakers; so the bridge between the Elders and the youth. And what the youth told us is that culture is our identity and pride. It's where we belong. It's spiritual ceremonies. It's kindness and respect. Our sense of culture prevents criminal activity and prevents suicide.

**And what the youth told us is that culture  
is our identity and pride.**

And just to share an example from the Métis youth ... three years ago, three of the youth went to West Edmonton Mall to apply for a job and they didn't get anything. Three years later they're walking tall. They had pride, they had lots of self-esteem because they knew who they are and where they came from. They went in with first class résumés and it was with them, walking tall going in ... five of them have jobs now. So when we think about a small example, which is not small, it's big, and the importance of culture in the lives of youth ... that they become contributing members of society. When our youth contribute to the greater society we're all winners in that. This cultural initiative is all about that. It's about our youth and as well, strengthening our youth.

Culture is so important in everyone's presentation. Our guest speaker as well talked about safe communities. All of this is interconnected and linked to making a difference. I can't strongly emphasize the importance of culture for our children ... First Nations and Métis children in care.

And others told us that action is needed. That we should:

- Develop a cultural policy framework to ensure that culture will be embedded in everything we do.

## Cultural Training Review

- Ensure First Nations/Métis children have a cultural plan.
- Involve Elders and the community to develop the cultural training.
- Involve First Nations/Métis as well in the delivery of the cultural training within their communities.



Darlene Plamonden

And now we're coming to the recommendations and from your vision from June 17<sup>th</sup> last year, when we first met, to our actions today. These recommendations are a path ahead with our direction. Sarah mentioned to the Minister at lunch about a journey. It's our journey together. And sometimes that journey is equally important as our destination. We're one more step again in our positive working relationship. So this is all about children. There are six recommendations:\*

- 1 Develop a cultural policy framework.
- 2 Develop a program that promotes cultural competence.
- 3 Ensure that program delivery is aligned with the principles and practices of adult education.
- 4 Conduct an evaluation of the impacts of training on casework practice, system, and policy changes.
- 5 Identify the audience required for training.

- 6 Commit resources to support the design, delivery and assessment of a cultural competency program.

We're looking at this now in terms of where do we go from here. When we look at this in terms of Phase 1, we're looking at developing a cultural policy framework. Let me just step back a minute. In terms of the recommendations, all of these will ensure engagement with your communities, meaningful involvement and engagement. It's not a process in that we, within the Ministry, are going to go and develop a training program. It's going to involve all of us together through this process.

a cultural policy framework ...  
includes a vision, a mission for including  
cultural competence in whatever we do.  
... This cultural policy framework will also  
guide us when we develop standards,  
policies, program, and evaluation.

So in this first phase it'll be about developing a cultural policy framework which includes a vision, a mission for including cultural competence in whatever we do. What are some of our strategies? What outcomes do we anticipate? What type of evaluation will we have through this process? This cultural policy framework will also guide us when we develop standards, policies, program, and evaluation. It will address the importance of meaningful engagement of First Nations and Métis and others involved in the process.

\* See Appendix 3

## Cultural Training Review

### Fred Anderson

And if I may add to that. We would talk about some principles that we could all agree upon; some values, like what we believe in, what you believe in, that would need to be part of that framework.

### Joey Hamelin

Part of Phase 1 will be designing and developing a cultural competency program. It will include ensuring program delivery is aligned with principles and practices of adult education. We will engage DFNAs, CFSAs, First Nations, Métis staff, Métis organizations, to develop the program and along with Elders and youth. That means, we will coordinate local participation in the program development.

And our second phase would be around delivering the program, the competency program. This will mean recruiting local community leaders, experts, to share insights and knowledge and become the mentors to participants in the cultural competency program. It's about them being the teachers and it's about recruiting agencies to be involved at the local level to supervise the program.

And our Phase 3 then is to look at ... there's always an evaluation ... what are some of the outcomes. And when we look at that, we also need to be doing this from the lens and from the perspective of Aboriginal research methodologies and collaborative community-based assessments.

And in closing, we need to do our part in teaching, and practising our culture to be able to teach our children and grandchildren about the old ways, about their ancestors, about prayers, about their language, about the traditions and about the land. To be able to see our children praying in a sweat lodge, dancing in a sun dance, participating in a round dance and feast, and dancing the Red River Jig one thousand years from now. Each of us has a role to play in making this happen. Thank you.

### Darlene Plamonden, Intergovernmental Affairs, Treaty 8

Are those recommendations to us here, or who takes the lead on that, is the question ... to get it going? What's the step to put it into action?

### Response: Steve MacDonald

Right now, if this table thinks we've got it right, just like the other piece of work on the Designate, those recommendations are basically what we think are the right next steps. That's actually a good question. If the governors say, "You are doing the right things. Now get on and do it," then those are the actions that we take and we will report back to you at the next meeting in terms of how much progress we have made.

### Chief Rose Laboucan

I guess my question is ... who is this program, once it's developed, delivered to? Number two, it's kind of ... I'm unsure of where you're going in developing a cultural policy framework. I can understand if there is a development of a policy framework to make it mandatory to include culture but I'm not sure how you got that worded. I'm not clear. I need to talk with somebody about that. Because of the fact that we have only ... our collaboration was to work together to make a difference for a child, right? That's the whole concept behind this table.



Chief Rose Laboucan, Hon. Yovonne Fritz and Chief Gayle Strikes With A Gun

And right now, we have delegated authority in our cooperation. You know, delegation, what is that? Is that a hand out or is that a hand down? Then you have the authority. Actually, the authority is under legislation, under the Act. So what authority do we really have in our delegation? I mean, are you going to create a cultural policy? Where are we going here? I'm not sure.

I love the concept, don't get me wrong. I like the idea behind it, but at the same time, if we are going to develop something like this, there has to be better communication. There has to be better collaboration, and how that would work. I just feel that it's so important.

The keynote speaker this morning talked about maltreatment, and I think that's continuing in the child welfare program. We have to stop it somehow because I think that in this collaboration, even working together, you know, I don't want to get a letter two weeks from now telling me, "I've decided something and we're discussing it now." I think it's important that it has to stop, and hence my comments. We do want a better relationship. We want to work with this Province to cut the numbers down, have better outcomes, so that we can take care of our own, so that we can become healthy.

If you're developing this framework, whom is it going to go to? Is it going to be to the foster parents? I don't know.

### Darlene Plamonden

Basically those are the same questions I had. The other question I had was for Fred and Joey. When they went out and did their work, who did you engage?

### Response: Joey Hamelin

We met with all of the Delegated First Nation Agencies through our Treaty 6, 7, & 8 tables, with the CFSAs, with the Elders. We had a meeting at Onion Lake with the Treaty 6 Elders, and the Elders in Grand Prairie, First Nations and Métis Elders in the surrounding

area, with the Métis organization, with internal, with the CFSAs, with youth, the Métis network. We went to Amiskwaciy College as well.

This piece of the work was looking at finding out what is out there, what currently exists within the Ministry, identifying gaps, what are the gaps, and what we need to do. And when we think about the number of children in care, and the importance of culture in a child's life ... this was what the first phase was about. And this is what people basically were telling us, and we tried to capture it. We have a report, trying to capture in there everything that we heard, including some of the research that we reviewed. And so this phase, people that we met said, "Come back. Come back to our community. We need to engage our community members, not just our agencies in this process." And we said, "The next phase includes that." This part is us knocking on doors and saying, "What do we have?" And we found we don't have anything.



Judy Ostrowski and Chief Ernest Wesley

We found that the delegation training that we have that is delivered in child welfare when you're a worker, and you take the delegation training ... there's an Aboriginal three-day training. That was never designed to be cultural training, but the perception in the community is that it is cultural training, but it isn't cultural training. So we needed to talk with everyone, including Workforce Development and everyone in terms of what cultural training is.

## Cultural Training Review

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And so we identified the need for that. But then this next part is the engagement and the accountability, as Chief Rose was saying. We're not going to sanction something and it's not where we want to go. We need to ensure that connection with you and develop that framework. It will help us develop that linkage with you and accountability back to you and people in the community. We are going to be driving this through our DFNAs.

### Chief Rose Laboucan

I guess if a ... I don't know if any of you have read the Nielson report. In that report, it indicates the intent of the 1969 White Paper, and the demise of Indian reservations. And so it is from that concept that I question a lot of these things. It isn't because I'm trying to be mean or anything else. But I know the intent of this country. I have access to a lot of secret documents. And people say, "What the hell is a secret document?" A secret document is something that is not shared with anybody else, with the intent of what people want to do. So what I hear of cultural policy ... that's word sell. It's just a terminology that we use, that words mean.

When I looked at the comments I made before ... Driftpile has had in the last few years a lot of our children in care. The first one was very traumatic, and it was really sad. But the children in care did not even know they had a relative. They didn't know ... let alone anything about culture. They didn't even know they had an uncle or an aunt. They weren't told.

And my councilor, who ... most of his family were raised in foster care ... tried to get a hold of his sister and realized she had passed on just a year before that. There is no communication. So there ... I think one of the Chiefs on that side said, "We need to know when there is something that goes on." Some of us are making a real effort to know. If I have a family who wants to adopt, they have to come and see us. And one of the mandates they have when they adopt a child is to visit our community, to come back, help us do our

celebrations, whether it's Treaty day or during the powwow, whatever.

You actually have families, non-Aboriginal families that have adopted, walking around in powwows and showcase them, show that there is that collaboration. But at no point in time should that child ever be rid of his heritage. It's scary to hear cultural policy. Our Treaty is not policy. Our Treaty will never become a mere policy in this country. That's all I have to say.

### Response: Fred Anderson

If I may, Chief Rose, I'd like to say that what you said is profound. And part of today is hearing what you're saying because when we set out to do this, we wanted to come back, get your feedback, get your ideas, and, you know, your idea of what you'd said, time and time again about collaboration; this is about that.

And the term "cultural policy," we hear that. We'll probably go back and say that needs to be looked at and, you know, to be more appropriate. So thank you.

### Brian Hjesvold, Co-Chair, Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services Authority

I guess one of the questions now, I think along the same line that Chief Laboucan claimed, that we need some clarity in regards to developing a cultural policy



Fred Anderson with Hon. Yvonne Fritz

## Cultural Training Review

framework. I'm trying to figure out for what purpose. I mean, we all recognize the fact that culture for youth, children in care is important, and that they're exposed to that; that they're introduced to their First Nations, and the culture, and the ceremonies, and that they get the understanding of that. But what's the Ministry trying to do here when we're talking about this framework? Is this about developing some kind of training for CFS staff so that they have a better awareness of the diversity? Because cultural training ... one of the things I've always had the problem with is the fact that ... and "cultural" is probably the wrong word for it ... training or awareness, is because there's so much diversity just within this province in regards to the different First Nations, and the different ceremonies, and traditions, and that sort of thing.

Just sort of saying we've got cultural training, or cultural awareness are two different things. You know, there's a certain awareness that I think people need to have in regards to some of the struggles that Aboriginal peoples face, so they can understand and be able to deal ... so they can get around or deal with some of the perceptions that are out there in regards to the reasons why there are so many children in care. I think we need some clarification there. That's where it's lost.

### Response: Joey Hamelin

We have it in the report. It's around cultural sensitivity and around the things Chief Rose said about the children coming home and not having that connection. It's about the connection right at the onset. And even preventing children from coming into care. It's about policy makers that develop programs, and child welfare policies, and it's about that sense ... that awareness and understanding, respect and regard. So in developing policies, that sensitivity and that understanding, and respect and regard, because at the end of the day it's about that child, and we all have our roles to play. So our report ... the good questions you have ... will explain it better in each of the recommendations.



Barbara Cuningham and Sharon Holtman



Judy Ostrowski



Joey Hamelin and Theresa Bull

## Cultural Training Review

... our people also could use a bit of occidental cultural awareness training too ...  
because we need to understand each other.

### Chief James Ahnassay

In terms of developing training, and cultural awareness, I agree with what Brian said. There is a need for consideration. There are some commonalities that we, I suppose, identified in training. Certainly, when we go to develop training for CFSA staff or DFNAs, we need to ensure that training is linked to the area or tribes and that would be a good thing. Also, it's not only just a type of training that is about the ceremonies and so on. Also, we should include our kind of foods, our cultural practice, especially the type of animals that we eat and so forth because we don't want workers coming into our homes and doing an investigation, and they mistake, say, a skinned rabbit for a cat, or something like that.

And at the same time, our people also could use a bit of occidental cultural awareness training too. You know, because we need to understand each other.

### Response: Fred Anderson

And if I may, Chief. The intent of that exercise, part of that review, was to get at that because that's really fundamental. It has to be local. It has to be developed and designed so that it's appropriate. And it's about respect. Really, it truly comes down to respect.

### Chief Gayle Strikes With A Gun

I wanted to also add, just as the Chiefs said, that communication is very important. We need to ... even though we're going to be planning here ... we need to ensure that within our communities that our children, our parents, Elders, are all aware of the process. Each of our communities, in terms of our geographical

location, is unique. That needs to be taken into consideration as well. And I just have a question. These are the recommendations? What's your time frame?

### Response: Joey Hamelin

If it's okay to move forward, we would be looking at September, being out there. You know, and again, it depends on where we go from here.

### Chief Gayle Strikes With A Gun

When will you start?

### Response: Joey Hamelin

Well, we would start to look at developing a project charter. Maybe just to explain in terms of some of our processes and people that are engaged in this, it will be in partnership and localized. It's not going to be a Ministry, top-down driven process, with set engagement.

### Response: Fred Anderson

Question on timeline? Clearly, we need to develop an implementation plan where we can see, you know, milestones to be worked on. So that'll be part of the implementation plan. ... starting in September.

### Response: Steve MacDonald

Maybe I can add to that. The points the Chiefs raised in terms of collaboration, communication ... important language ... and the need to engage at a community level to respect the uniqueness of each community, adds a level of complexity in all this.



The key thing is to resource this. This can't be done off the side of someone's desk. We have to think about what sort of investment we need to make. We think this is important ... my personal view is this is very important. We have to resource this and to develop an implementation plan that is realistic. The worst thing we could do is say, "Okay, we've got it written. It's done." This is going to take some time, to do it right and respectfully. I look at how much time and energy went into just figuring on what we now have.

**It's really about how we make sure that culture is considered in everything we do in this business.**

It's interesting, Chief's reaction to the cultural policy framework. I, too, had a bit of problem with that bureaucratic language. I know what they're getting at now. It's back to the point that this isn't about us taking some of our case workers for one day of training. This is about ... we need to infuse this with everything we do. So in the next presentation you'll see that way of thinking around Aboriginal recruitment. It's a fundamental issue. It's a cultural issue. It's about creating a caring and safe environment, and I think that's what this is about.

So we need a sense of urgency around this. We have to get clear on what we need to do, and then resource it accordingly. It's going to take some people. It's going to take some money. You have my commitment to try and find some resources. With that said, it can't take two years to do this. We need to get out and do what needs to be done. And again, back to the earlier presentation ... what are those early wins? What are those quick plans that we can show this is important. So we'll get back to this table.

And I agree with Joey. I had a chance to read the full report last night, and it is clear. I felt more comfortable after reading that. There's the right intent here, and Chief, exactly what you said: This isn't about the department telling you what your culture is and here's the manual to read. It's really about how we make sure that culture is considered in everything we do in this business. There's Aboriginal culture; there's other cultures.

### Brian Broughton

I simply want to say I thought what you presented was very good, and this certainly is a strong building block for moving forward. The concept of cultural competence, that's what I really like, and I think if we focused on that, that's a much better word. If that's what you talk about, then we all will have the capacity to work with others who are different from us. I really thought that was great. I think we can all benefit from that.

**The concept of cultural competence ... if we focused on that ... if that's what you talk about, then we all will have the capacity to work with others who are different from us.**

### Audrey Franklin, Co-Chair, North Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority

And the Chief mentioned our commonalities, and when I was in university, I, as a Métis ... we were supposed to identify who we were, and at that time I couldn't until I did some further reading and seeking some Elders. I lived down in the States. But I ended up saying that we're all humans, first of all, and we're all

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medicine wheels, and we have a dilemma in our values. We live in harmony as an Aboriginal person, or as an indigenous. I'm an indigenous Métis. I live in harmony with Mother Earth, whereas on the other side, I could become involved with the control of Mother Earth, and kind of seek her resources. So we have a duty, a dilemma situation of values that is taking place here. To know that we're humans, first of all, and that this value system that says that it belongs to First Nations ... it belongs to the human race. Like that's honouring our Elders, like I said, and honouring Mother Earth, and all those different ... but anyways, spirituality was one part of it, and that our children are sacred. They are a gift from the Creator. We, sitting around this table, maybe should pray about them every day to recognize that they are sacred.

### **Ann Nipshank, Manager of Child Welfare, Treaty 8**

When we look at the Aboriginal response or the Alberta response model and the four Aboriginal Pillars, one was to was to engage the children with their community and family culture. I remember when caseworkers were saying, "Yes, we understand that some of this stuff is to get the children to know their culture, and where they come from." But the point I'm trying to make is that they complained that whoever it was, was unable to do that because of the resource. There were cutbacks to funding. There were cutbacks to the budget. But they had to follow through on the cultural plan to ensure those children can have family visits or to attend cultural ceremonies. So how much of this the policy framework will address in terms of ensuring that the case managers who want to execute this stuff, they want to do it, but have limitations to do a lot of

the culture stuff? So I think that one of the concerns, and you spoke of it already ... that's resourcing for this.

### **Response: Steve MacDonald**

Thank you for mentioning that. Resources will always be a challenge in this Ministry so we have to set priorities and make sure that we back what we say we will do.

What I take away from here is that the commitment around this table to working on this piece of work is there. There's cautions in terms of language, in terms of communication, and ensuring that the community is involved. But I think there is a need for communication so people can say, "I think I understand where you're going, what's right." And as Brian says, give us that clarity and sense of what we are talking about. And, again, resources.

We're going to have to move on if we want to get through the agenda. And I apologize if I cut anybody off.

Now, I'll once again comment on the flexibility of this table to adjust the agenda. What I'd ask is that we move up the Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention item. We have been joined by some guests. One of them is Elder Alvena Strasbourg. We also have a few people from the Ministry, Sangeeta Sicking and Cathy Cloughton. And in terms of making this presentation now, the sequence of this makes a lot of sense because it really does align with the cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness. And this is a good example of what that looks like when you're dealing with an issue that really is a number one issue. So I will turn it over to you, Cathy.

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

### Cathy Claughton, Manager, Workforce Planning

I hope I have my voice here for a little bit longer. Thank you all very much for inviting us to be here today. We're very honoured to present to you the amazing work of our Community of Practice.

I am Cathy Claughton, and my co-lead for the Opening the Circle Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Initiative, Sangeeta Sicking, is here with me. We will be doing a short, formal presentation. But first and most importantly, we would like to introduce our very esteemed and honourable Elder, Alvena Strasbourg.

I'd like to just tell you a little bit about her. Alvena has been working in the area of Aboriginal recruitment and retention for over four decades. She's worked with our Ministry in many capacities since 1971. She was born in Owl River, Alberta. She is 90 years young as of next week, June 10, and she has not missed one working session or leadership advisory team meeting.

Much like young children on their first day of school, Sangeeta and I often struggle and wonder if we're doing all the right things. And we look back to Alvena and our other Elder, Jerry Woods, for ongoing support and guidance. Alvena is always saying to us, "What are you worried about? We believe in you. We're behind you. We've told you to do certain things. Now stop worrying and talking about what to do and get on doing it, and don't look back." So we rely on her for that. Without further ado, I'd love to have Alvena talk to you. She has a lot of wisdom to offer. I will let her tell you her story.

### Elder Alvena Strasbourg

Good afternoon. It is an honour to be here and to speak to you. It's very cold out there. It's turning winter again, I think.

Okay, like Cathy said, I am from the Fort McMurray area. That's where I was raised, and that's where I worked. I have been working in the area of Aboriginal

recruitment and retention for several decades with the oil and gas industry mostly in Fort McMurray.

I was hired as a native recruiter for Syncrude in 1978, and I also worked with Suncor. I worked with the Aboriginal people in our area because that was our land that they were on, and they had to hire our people. So we did get a lot of our people working with Syncrude. I got them trained at Keyano College. I was on the Board of Governors at Keyano College. All the young people that I put into the schools into the trades training, they were hired from there. I went back to Keyano for the 25 year anniversary, and many of the people I used to know are still working there. They were our Aboriginal people.

In 1992, I decided I was going to retire, and I came to Edmonton. I wasn't retired too long because I was approached to go to work with Children's Services. I was the Aboriginal recruiter for Region 10 at that time, now Region 6, from 1995 to 1998. I was their co-chair with Doris Badir. We did a lot of hard work for three years, but one by one the pillars fell, and all our hopes and dreams went down the drain.

... I have learned the importance and necessity of building relationships with numerous stakeholders, engaging the Aboriginal community, and having leadership support to keep recommendations moving forward.

In all my work in recruitment and retention, I have learned the importance and necessity of building relationships with numerous stakeholders, engaging the Aboriginal community, and having leadership support to keep recommendations moving forward. It was not easy, but I was determined.

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

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Most of the government initiatives I have worked on started with great enthusiasm, yet did not result in implementation of the critical changes that were required. That is why I told the dedicated group of people working on this Community of Practice that I want to see transformational change in attitudes towards Aboriginal people in the Ministry.

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**... you have to understand the Aboriginal people, their beliefs, customs, cultures, to fully come to a mutual agreement, and find workable solutions for all involved.**

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I was very happy to hear that the Deputy Minister said that the whole system has to change. You can't expect transformational change if you don't work with the recruitment process as part of the entire system. Retention is also important but, most of all, you have to understand the Aboriginal people, their beliefs, customs, cultures, to fully come to a mutual agreement, and find workable solutions for all involved.

There's a myth out there that says Aboriginal people do not have good work ethics. They have a higher rate of turnover and absenteeism. The fact is, most Aboriginal people are skilled, productive, and reliable employees who are valued by their employers and work in all areas of the economy in various positions. If treated fairly, Aboriginal people would be reliable, good workers. Employers have to learn to understand, to know how to work with them. They need to learn when they do not understand something to ask. Aboriginal people have to work so much harder to prove themselves. Do not judge them before you get to know them. I'm not saying Aboriginal people need special treatment; they need kindness, and understanding. Do not isolate them. They will serve you well.

Many Aboriginal people have broken the barriers, and are now working in top positions. One of them for sure was Ralph Steinhauer, who became the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta. And many, many more people are on the top now as well.

I have worked with Métis Child and Family Services now for 15 years. I'm currently vice-president of MCFS. And they are the Aboriginal Children's Services. On staff they have 17, 18 social workers, and many other employees. They are mostly all of Aboriginal descent. They work in all areas of Children's Services, and help many families. They do not have any problems with the Aboriginal people because they understand the children. They work all hours of the day and night when needed. This group of people are dedicated, both men and women. Like all Aboriginal programs, they're always fighting for survival, fighting for funding. The executive director, Don Langford, is very dedicated to the program and its staff. They help so many people because Aboriginal people feel comfortable coming to the office.

I have worked almost 40 years with Aboriginals. I haven't seen much change. Sixty-five per cent of children in care are Aboriginal. Seventy-five per cent of people in the jails are Aboriginal. There is something dreadfully wrong with the current system. It needs help. We need to face that.

However, there is hope for change. There are more Aboriginal people working with Aboriginal people in all the areas of Children's Services. We need them there because our children are suffering. You hear it in the news every day what's going on. I worked with social workers from 1971 in the Boyle Street area when I first started working with Aboriginal people. And my social workers were afraid of the Aboriginal people. They used to have to take me along so that I could take them into the house. That is not good. We shouldn't have to be afraid of one another. I had gotten very angry myself at them, but I'm not ever afraid of anybody, and I've never threatened anyone; maybe I should.

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

The reason why I'm still involved in this particular initiative, when I'm turning 90 next week, is because I believe in the work this dedicated group is trying to accomplish. I see and feel a different momentum with the "Opening the Circle" initiative. I hope you will all continue to support the work of the Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Community of Practice. I thank you for listening. Thank you.

### Cathy Claughton

One of the things I didn't mention is Alvena has also published. She has published a book called, *Memories of a Métis Woman: From the Bush to the Boardroom*. If you haven't read it, it's a really good read.

One of the things about Alvena is that she has earned her executive status by being an executive in many different employment forums as she told you, but she also used to work a trapline. She's hunted much of her life, and taught her children this skill. Most amazingly to my 10-year-old son, she shot a bear on her own, right in the eye and knocked him dead.

### Alvena Starsbourg

And I used one bullet from a 22 Winchester rifle!

### Cathy Claughton

Alvena, most importantly, is the embodiment of what we really are all trying to do for our Aboriginal children and families. She has been a role model to five generations of very successful children who will all be celebrating her big birthday soon. She has always told us on the committee that not one day of her life has she ever felt less than anyone else, nor has she ever acted like it. And she feels that's why her children are so strong. I think that's really important for people to recognize.

So I'm going to do my best to tell you about the important work of our "Opening the Circle" initiative. First, I'd like to say that one thing we've learned is that there are no coincidences. It's no coincidence that we



Louise Charach



Barbara Cunningham



Ronald Gaida

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

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named our initiative “Opening the Circle.” The circle comes back to us through our work over and over again. The circle is important as a symbol in all cultures. There is no beginning and no end in a circle. There is no winner, and there is no loser. Everyone can look a speaker in the eye in a circle. To be in circle means to belong. We were delighted when we got here and saw a big circle. To us, that’s a really good sign. And I am just hoping and praying that I don’t speak in circles.

So with that context in mind, I would like to proudly tell you about the work of our Community and a little bit about our background. The reasoning behind this initiative was that it is felt and believed that having more Aboriginal workers at all levels in the organization will ensure that there are more culturally appropriate services provided to Aboriginal children, youth, and families, thereby hopefully improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families. Even though our initiative is about Aboriginal recruitment and retention, at the heart of the initiative has always been, and will continue to be, the children that we serve, and the families.

Our leadership team and Sangeeta and I have had a lot of discussions about why we have increased so much in scope, and people question us, and say things like, “Well, why didn’t you restrict the initiative to those people currently working in the Ministry who have an interest in this topic? Why didn’t you just get busy going out to career fairs, and maybe change a few interview questions? And why is your scope so large? Why do you now have 120 stakeholders, and so many people involved in this?”

And I would strongly suggest that no, we have not increased our scope to be too large. We are exactly where we feel we need and want to be. One of our key Ministry priorities is collaboratively working with Aboriginal communities and strengthening relationships. Through the work of our community stakeholders, who represent a wide variety of stakeholders all with a strong interest in the well being

of Aboriginal children, youth and families, we have improved relationships, communication, trust and developed recommendations that we hope you will see are going to begin to transform and impact the system.

The mission of our initiative is “collaborative strategies will be developed to shift workplace attitudes and relationships, and deepen cultural understanding of Aboriginal peoples, resulting in our ability to attract and retain Aboriginal employees at all levels in the organization.”

Our community consists of about 15 leadership members who are key stakeholders from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educational institutions, social service agencies, DFNA and Ministry front-line staff and representatives from other ministries. Recently, I believe the city police has joined our family. And they’re 85 per cent Aboriginal, our leadership team. We now have 120 community members, so we’re quite excited about that.

Our initiative, and our Elders demand, that we be action focused. Less talk and more action. And the work that we’re doing is based on evidence and research, largely not from papers and books and periodicals, but from the knowledge that our people bring to the table which is also consistent with the literature, evidence and research. We often say, “the wisdom is in the room.”

Everything that we’re doing, we are delighted to see, closely aligns with the work that Jennifer Yip Choy and Joey Hamelin in our Ministry have documented in the Cultural Training Review, and the strong recommendations coming out of the Child Intervention Review. We’ve also built on the groundbreaking work of the Provincial Aboriginal Advisory Committee (PAAC). They were the forerunners of the work that we have done, and we’re honoured to follow in their footprints. We are hopeful that we can take recommendations and strategies forward that they wanted to see implemented.

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

So what have we done to date? This is kind of getting into the question, “So what? What has your community accomplished that is important and moving you towards achieving your mission?” We’ve conducted focus groups with our own Aboriginal Ministry workers. We thought it important, as the basis for the direction in which we take this initiative, to find out what drew them to the Ministry, what’s working for them, what’s not working for them, and what changes they would like to see. So that has been a key foundation for our work. We have, as I mentioned, built ongoing relationships with stakeholders. We’ve held several working sessions where we have used the wisdom from the community to develop creative recommendations for addressing recruitment and retention gaps. We’ve had three sessions so far: One on building culturally inclusive work and learning environments; one on recruitment practices; and next week, June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, we’re holding one on effective Aboriginal retention strategies.

At all of our sessions, we ask our stakeholders if we have the right people at the table or if they know of others who should be there that we should be inviting. We try to be very inclusive and believe those committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families will find their way to our circle. If you know people that should be part of our circle, or you believe they would want to be there, please send them our way.

**They want to see transformational change in relationships and in attitudes at all levels in the Ministry.**

We’ve also developed a recommendations framework which Sangeeta will be speaking a little bit about. So the basic framework that Alvena, Jerry Wood, our other Elder, and our leadership team have given us to

work within is this: They want to see transformational change in relationships and in attitudes at all levels in the Ministry. No small task!

A few months ago, Sangeeta and I presented our leadership team with some short-term recommendations that we thought they would be happy with, and Sarah Potts, and our Elders provided us with feedback we were not expecting. I’ll let Sangeeta tell you about that. It was a humbling and very strong learning experience, so suffice it to say, we have learned our lesson and we are not taking or recommending any easy steps anymore. We’re looking for short term, necessary actions to be implemented, but mostly our eye is on the long term horizon. We are seeking, and will be recommending, long-term solutions to change systemic problems as well.

**... there have been feelings of discouragement, and a feeling of broken promises before when good work like this starts and then it gets shelved.**

Our next steps, and we’re excited about this, as we’re turning an important chapter in our initiative. We’re looking at pulling together all of the recommendations from our working sessions, and our focus groups, synthesizing them into key short term and long term recommendations, having the leadership team prioritize them, and then we’ll be sharing those between July and September with our key stakeholder groups, like PAAC, and the Métis Steering Committee, and the DFNA table. Of course, we are happy to share our recommendations with other stakeholders if they’d like to be involved in reviewing our recommendations. We will be developing a comprehensive communication and change management plan to support the recommendations framework, and to take the initiative forward in a new and hopeful way.

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

The system as a whole needs to change, and what's fundamental to that is the relationships ... the relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people ... the relationships between our Ministry staff and our clients.

One of the things that we're trying to address by doing things differently and taking a critical learning approach to our work is that, as Alvena has mentioned, there have been feelings of discouragement and a feeling of broken promises before when good work like this starts and then it gets shelved. We've had feedback, most recently from our Deputy Minister, who was at one of our staff meetings, that was shared with our leadership team, that also addressed some of these concerns and left the leadership team feeling very hopeful. They feel that this initiative has key senior leadership support and they "get it". This time the work feels different, and is definitely moving the Ministry in the right direction.

I want to end on a quote that I think exemplifies the hope that our community has, and talks about. It is from Emily Dickinson, and it is

*Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,*

and I can tell you that if we even wanted to stop, Alvena would not let us, so you have nothing to worry about there. And so I'm happy now to introduce my esteemed sister and co-lead, Sangeeta Sicking, who will tell you more about our recommendations framework.

### Sangeeta Sicking, Manager, Organizational Support Initiatives

Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you, Cathy. Thank you all for inviting us to be here. You know when you watch the Oscars, and you're always going, "Oh God,

please don't trip when you go up the stairs." I'm like, "Oh God, please don't let me trip as I come down the stairs."

So here I am. You can actually see me above the podium. At one of our working sessions, the podium went up to here, so that was a challenge. Now we all just sit in a circle, and the speaker sits in a circle, too, which works way better for me given my short height.

What I'm going to do is just spend a few moments talking about our recommendations framework, and I will tell you the story in a moment that Cathy has set me up to tell you, but first just a little bit about the recommendations framework.

As Cathy and Alvena have both mentioned, this Community of Practice has said that they want to see the recommendations from this initiative resulting in transformational change. And what they really see as the cornerstone of that is changing relationships. That's the heart of this initiative. The system as a whole needs to change, and what's fundamental to that is the relationships ... the relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people; the relationships between DFNA staff and CFSA staff, and Métis settlement staff; the relationships between our Ministry staff and our clients. There's power imbalances there, and issues around trust. So, relationships on many levels have to change.

We've really heard that this transformational change needs to happen, but that's going to take time, and we view these as our longer term recommendations. In concert with that, though, our community has said that they want to see short-term action happen as well.



## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

And so we have smaller steps, which we're calling our short-term recommendations, and those are the many small steps that when you take them together they actually contribute to the transformational change we're looking for.

What we're going to be doing over the next few months is we're going to be taking all the data we've gathered to date, data from the focus groups with our own Ministry Aboriginal staff, recommendations that have arisen out of all of the working sessions we've had, as well as recommendations and strategies we've gleaned from research and literature. We're going to be going through all of this information with the lens of "is this an idea that will deepen cultural understanding of each other and how we relate to each other?" We were very thrilled to see that this is very much in line with the thinking that emerged from the work that Joey Hamlin and Jennifer Yip Choy did with many others in the Cultural Training Review.

Now, to tell you the side story about what happened when we first presented the recommendations ... Cathy and I went very excitedly to our leadership team, I think it was in February, with a list of recommendations brought up at the focus groups and different working sessions that we felt we would start to champion in the Ministry. And so, just as we talk about us as being school children with the Elders and our leadership team, and that's often how it feels because they guide us and teach us in so many ways, we excitedly presented our recommendations that we thought we would start to champion. Then there was dead silence in the room. Cathy and I have a mixed blessing and curse in that we seem to elicit great honesty from people. With our leadership team, we're grateful that they have that trust in us, but they told us, pretty much in no uncertain terms, that those recommendations were just not good enough. They felt the recommendations we had proposed totally skimmed the surface. We didn't get to the point of starting to create that transformational change. And

so we got it. We really got it. We have to look at things in the short term that will yield results, but also in the longer term that will result in transformational change. I think what Cathy wanted me to tell you is that our leadership team is very forthright with us in expressing their approval and disapproval. And in particular, Alvena is very forthright with us. And for those of you who don't know, she has a cane, but in the wintertime she has an ice pick at the end of that cane. And she's not afraid to use it. Just so you know for future reference.



Joanna Gladue

I want to tell you one more thing about Alvena that I just learned in the car as we were driving over together. As you all know, she will be turning 90 next Friday. What you may not know is that the night she was born, June 10, 1911 a terrible tornado raged through her community and caused significant harm and damage, but she was born safely, thank goodness. But now she says, that's what makes her strong. And the second thing you may not know is another tornado raged again on her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. Now tell me, what are the odds of that? And so I say to Alvena, "Oh, now I know why you have such a powerful and determined spirit." It is with this strong spirit that she comes to our Community to help with this important work.

### Elder Alvena Strasbourg

In the same spot, on the south shore of Lac La Biche, if anybody knows where that is.

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

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### Sangeeta Sicking

And so that's the spirit that helps to guide our team.

Now, as I mentioned, we have gleaned so many excellent strategies from the work that's been done from this Community of Practice, but what we wanted to do is just spend a few minutes giving you a snapshot of the kinds of recommendations that are emerging and that we're going to be vetting through our leadership team in early July.

What is of particular interest to note ... and we were certainly thrilled and relieved to see this when we read the report from the Cultural Training Review, was that so many of the recommendations in the Cultural Training Review that you just heard about have been echoed in the work from our Community of Practice. So we're getting very excited to see that a lot of the same messages are coming from different areas, from different stakeholders, and there's a lot of synchronicity between the two initiatives.

We'll just go through a couple of the recommendations. As was mentioned in the Cultural Training Review, our community has also said that the development of a cultural policy framework is absolutely going to be essential. We've also been told many times that our Ministry recruitment process is sterile, rigid, unfriendly, inflexible, and completely unwelcoming. We've been told, in no uncertain terms, that we have to completely revamp our Ministry recruitment process if we're going to be able to better attract and support Aboriginal people through that process.

Actually, when we presented to the Provincial Aboriginal Advisory Committee in March, one of the PAAC members said to us they were relieved to see that Human Resources was trying to become more human. And we thought that was a very impactful statement. See, I told you. People have no problem being honest with us!

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... we have to completely revamp our Ministry recruitment process if we're going to be able to better attract and support Aboriginal people ...

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As was also expressed in the Cultural Training Review, the comment on this slide\* about people needing to experience the Aboriginal culture, to learn about it and appreciate it and value us, we absolutely loved the comment: "They have to sit with us and get to know us." Our community has told us that in so many ways. And in fact, a lot of the work that Cathy and I do is spent meeting people, talking to them, learning to relate to them on a different level, learning about their culture and their experiences.

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"We have to move beyond tolerance to acceptance."

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One of the senior Aboriginal managers in the Ministry, Bert Auger ... I'm sure many of you know him. He's a wonderful man, charming, friendly, very funny. He said such a powerful statement at our last working session when we talked about recruitment. He said, "We have to move beyond tolerance to acceptance." Often, we talk about learning to tolerate each other, and what Bert is saying is absolutely true. We have to move beyond that tolerance to accepting each other. That's when we're going to respect each other, understand each other, and value each other at a completely different level.

This comment from the Cultural Training Review, "Opportunities should be created for DFNA staff

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\* See Appendix 4

“So many of the tools in the Ministry ... human resources tools, child intervention tools ... many of the tools have to change to become more culturally relevant.”

and CFSA staff to trade places” has also been a recommendation we’ve heard from our leadership team as well as from our community of practice. We’ve heard from our DFNA staff that they often feel that CFSA staff feel more superior to the DFNA staff, or Métis settlement staff, and this is a critical relationship that has to change. We have to start viewing our DFNA and Métis settlement staff as very important resources and partners, and what better way to do this than by trading places and learning what it’s like to work in each other’s environments.

As expressed in the Cultural Training Review, the risk assessment approaches and tools need to be revised so they’re more culturally appropriate. Our Community of Practice has said, “So many of the tools in the Ministry ... human resources tools, child intervention tools ... many of the tools have to change to become more culturally relevant.”

And, finally, another example of a recommendation we’ve heard is that our Ministry needs to develop an Aboriginal Mentorship Program, Aboriginal Internship Program, and an Aboriginal Leadership Program. We’ve heard from many of our community participants that often when they join an organization, or a unit, they’re the only Aboriginal person on that team or in that unit, and it can be a very isolating experience for them. Our Community has often pointed out that if there were an Aboriginal network of support, that would be highly beneficial in helping Aboriginal employees to become more comfortable in the working environment. And then if there was actually an internship program where we brought people into the Ministry, we paired them up with an Aboriginal mentor at that time, and then helped them move through an Aboriginal leadership program, we

would have better success at retaining Aboriginal employees and seeing Aboriginal representation at different levels in our Ministry.

So again, these are just a snapshot, really, of the recommendations that we’ve been gleaming. We’re going to be going through probably about 100 recommendations with our leadership team on July 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, so get ready Sarah ... she’s part of that meeting. We’ll be going through about 100 recommendations and identifying which are the key ones to champion in the Ministry in the short term and the long term.

So, that brings us to this next slide\*, “What have we learned?” This is such a big question on so many levels, and to be completely candid with you, I don’t think Cathy and I could ever quite describe the extent of what we’ve learned on a professional level, but also a personal level, being part of this Community of Practice. We’ve heard many of our Community participants say that being a part of this initiative has been a very rich and transformative experience in their lives. When we took a step back and looked at this question from an organizational perspective, there were a lot of things that we’ve learned. It quickly became apparent to us that hiring and retaining Aboriginal workers would not be as simple as going to more career fairs or advertising in Aboriginal newspapers. It went far beyond that. We realized that we had to look at many of the deeper issues in order to effectively create a successful recruitment and retention strategy. For example, if Aboriginal students are not completing junior high or high school, or they’re not successfully transitioning to post-secondary, they would not be in the labour pool from which to recruit. So we had to look at many of the deeper issues.

\* See Appendix 4

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

Our scope also broadened because our leadership team in our Community of Practice told us very strongly that in order for us to be able to successfully retain Aboriginal workers, there has to be some significant review of the child intervention service delivery model. As the model is currently set up, it often puts Aboriginal workers in a conflicted position with their values, their culture and their beliefs, and it's very difficult to continue working in a conflicted position. So, we will be working with our Child Intervention Division to look at how we can review the child intervention system, and its impact on recruitment and retention.

... we will be working with our  
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and retention.

We also know that we have to make some very important systemic changes in the Ministry. Our current approach to focus on recruitment has been very short sighted. If we don't make fundamental changes in the organizational working environment, if we don't remove some of the systemic barriers, and put in place positive policies and practices, we won't be able to retain people. And then the last comment about reflective practice being needed. This again speaks to the fact that we have to be a more culturally competent organization, and embed the cultural traditions, values, and beliefs of the Aboriginal people. All of these things in conjunction will help to retain staff.

In this next slide\*, we wanted to include this quote by our Deputy Minister. We know you just saw this quote a few minutes ago in the Cultural Training Review,

Making our organization more  
culturally competent isn't as simple as  
implementing a one-day cultural  
awareness training session, or tweaking  
components of this system in isolation.  
The whole system has to change.

and we stole it from them, actually, and put it in our presentation as well. It's a very powerful quote, because it really speaks to the heart of what we've heard from our community of practice. He said:

*This isn't about cultural sensitivity training for the worker ... It has to be about the system as a whole; the policy development, the practice, the way we organize, all of those things must be infused with cultural sensitivity. ...*

He also said earlier today:

*Making our organization more culturally competent isn't as simple as implementing a one-day cultural awareness training session, or tweaking components of this system in isolation. The whole system has to change. Everything has to change.*

Our whole way of relating and being has to change. And when all of that works in concert, that's when we're going to see a more culturally competent organization and see the transformational change that Alvena was speaking about.

For our last slide\*, we wanted to just take a moment to talk about what difference will this initiative make because we're often asked the question: "So what? So what's different about this initiative?" We know that many people have come before us, and they've done a lot of great and amazing work. And we're grateful for

\* See Appendix 4

**In order to change relationships or to change attitudes ... we first need to change ourselves by learning to relate to one another on a deeper level, by learning about each other's cultures, by learning to appreciate and value each other's cultures.**

the work and the foundation that they've laid for us. But we try and tell people that, most importantly, if we have more Aboriginal staff, if we're successful with this initiative, which we believe we will be, we're going to be able to offer more culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal children, youth and families. And by infusing the child intervention system with cultural competence, that will lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth, and families. So we would say that's the most important difference.

The other thing we talk about is the fact that our society is becoming more and more diverse every day. Cathy and I have this joke because people have a really hard time pronouncing my name. I can't even tell you the number of versions of my name that exist. But we keep joking that there will be more and more people with names like "Sangeeta" in the future. The changes that we're trying to make in our organization for Aboriginal people, they will be beneficial for people of all cultures. We're becoming more and more diverse. The other comment is if we change our recruitment process to be able to better attract and support Aboriginal people through that process, again, it will be very beneficial for people coming from all cultures.

And finally, if we look at the numbers ... we hear a lot of numbers and a lot of tragic numbers ... but one of the most powerful numbers is the fact that Aboriginal people are the fastest growing population in our country. And so, really, they're our future talent pool. We need to make sure we have an organization that makes them feel engaged and valued, helps them to thrive, so they want to even come and work with us.

On a final note, people who work with Cathy and I know that we love quotes. So on a final note, we're going to share one more quote with you. And it's a quote by Mahatma Gandhi, where he says, "As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world, but it is in being able to remake ourselves."

In order to change relationships or to change attitudes, as Alvena has talked about, we first need to change ourselves by learning to relate to one another on a deeper level, by learning about each other's cultures, by learning to appreciate and value each other's cultures. It is only then that we're going to be able to create that transformational change in relationships and create better outcomes, not only for our Aboriginal people, but people of all cultures. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

### Rose Lameman

I guess I don't want to be negative, but I just wanted to find out what kind of conflicts were social workers experiencing within the workplace. You said there were conflicts so when they are conflicted they couldn't do their jobs.



Rose Lameman

## Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

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### Response: Sangeeta Sicking

That's an excellent question. We've heard about conflicts in two ways. One of the conflicts is Aboriginal workers feel sometimes that the way the service delivery model is set up, and it's very rigid, and they can't necessarily change the policies or the practices so that it may be more amenable and help them to work better with Aboriginal youth, children, and families. And so that was one way they were conflicted. The other way people are conflicted is in our organization. Many people told us in the Aboriginal focus groups that they find it difficult to speak out about systemic problems or other barriers. Many people felt that when they did speak out, there were consequences, or punitive action taken against them. So, we have to really work at this to make sure that we're an open organization that's willing and able to hear the information coming, so that we can change. We need to learn about it, and then change. So there were conflicts in different ways. Excellent question, thank you. Are there other questions before we have a suggestion?

### Darlene Plamonden

I'm hoping that you are going to have the same change in the cultural policy framework. They referred to the development of a cultural policy framework. I'm just reiterating the Chief's concern, that's all. It's the terminology.

### Response: Sangeeta Sicking

Yes, thank you. Other questions? Yes.

### Audrey Franklin

I don't know if it's a question or not, but I saw you at a different table. My name's Audrey. I was really impressed with both you and your colleague. I said that you girls were decolonized. You did a lot of inner work, you know, and that's what you said, "In order to work with people you've got to change within." And you girls supposedly did that, and I think you should write about that ... how you changed within, and present that at a different table. You girls are awesome, and I really appreciate Elder Alvena, and how you treat her. You guys just treat her like a jewel, and she is a jewel. She's a real gem. Thanks, Alvena.

### Response: Sangeeta Sicking

Thank you for that. It one of the highest compliments we've ever received. And thank you for calling us girls instead of ma'am. Somebody called me ma'am the other day. I was like, "What? No!"

Thank you everyone and now we have a suggestion that we all sing "Happy Birthday" to our Elder, Alvena, since it is her 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday next week.

## Update: Memorandum of Understanding

### Steve MacDonald

Well, so the agenda has to be flexible, not just in respect to the table. It is 3:10 p.m. My suggestion is we push through without a break because it will be hard to get the momentum back. I think we can go through the next two items fairly quickly and have some conversation on these, especially this one on the MOU given that next week the Minister is meeting with AOTC. The two ministers are meeting to go over the next steps and it will be another opportunity for the Chiefs to get an update. Then Sarah is going to lead us in a conversation about the next steps, and how we can keep the energy around the Minister's request and on how we can keep the momentum. Maybe we can get people out of here by 3:45 p.m. So is that fair to people? If you need to get up to refresh your coffee or make a phone call, please do.

So Catherine ... a little bit of an update on the MOU discussions.

### Catherine Pennington, Talking Stick Consulting Group

Great, thanks Steve. Well, I don't have any good jokes, unlike my good friend, Fred. I was asking Victor Horseman for some good jokes, but I guess I'm not that funny. Nothing is going to sound right if I try to tell it. Darlene is agreeing over there. And I don't have any great Elder stories. But you know, a great setup for me.

So first of all, I'd just like to acknowledge that we are in traditional territory of Treaty 6. I would like to thank the Elder for the opening prayer this morning. I would like to acknowledge the Elders in the room, the Chiefs in the room, the Chiefs who were here this morning, certainly the Minister, who was here this morning, Deputy Minister, and yourselves, dignitaries and technicians.

So for those of you who I have not yet met, my name is Catherine Pennington, and I'm a managing partner of Talking Stick Consulting Group. Together with my

business partner, David Luff, we are the facilitators for the Children and Youth Services MOU. We had the pleasure of providing an update in late November, shortly after we became engaged and the process officially began. We remain ever honoured to be part of this critical undertaking, which is intended to result in a high-level agreement which will positively impact lives of First Nations children, youth, and families.

As you know, the MOU is intended to set the framework for continued topics of mutual concern to be addressed after the implementation of the MOU. It's been well described to me many, many times that this will be a table for further conversations. I really like that terminology because I think of people coming together and sharing a meal and sharing ongoing conversations which is so critically important to children, youth, and families in Alberta.



Karen Egge

The intention of the presentation I'm about to provide is, basically, an update of the MOU progress to date. I can certainly say with all certainty that all parties remain ever-committed to the development of this high-level agreement to address the challenges of service delivery. And we are, indeed, on track to have an agreement in place in 2011.

And so with that, I'd like to begin the presentation.\* I'll give a little bit of the background ... the establishment of the Protocol Agreement in 2008 contemplated the establishment of further specific consultation that rose

\* See Appendix 5

## Update



Steve MacDonald with Theresa Bull



Steve MacDonald, Elder Eva Cardinal and Hon. Yvonne Fritz



Grand Chief Arthur Noskey and Chief James Ahnassay

out of the sub-tables and sub-agreements. And there was, indeed, an Education MOU signed in 2010.

The Treaty chiefs put forward a resolution in March of 2010 supporting the establishment of a sub-agreement on Children and Youth Services, pursuant to the Protocol Agreement. We fast forward into June of 2010, so a year ago, and then November 2010 where there was proposed follow-up action including a proposal to develop an MOU in eliminating jurisdictional struggles. The review panel report, which was a year ago and then released in October, called for an ongoing formal tripartite process to collaboratively address inequities for First Nations people in the child intervention system.

The present situation ... there is indeed an MOU steering committee, and working groups have been established and are meeting on a regular basis. The steering committee, the senior official steering committee, includes the Deputy Minister, the Assistant Deputy Ministers, Alberta Children and Youth Services and Aboriginal Relations directors, executive officers from Provincial Treaty Organizations 6, 7, and 8. The working group membership includes directors from Alberta Children and Youth Services and Aboriginal Relations, intergovernmental initiatives coordinators and technicians from Provincial Treaty Organizations 6, 7, and 8. We do have a number of folks here with us today who are involved in the process. And I should mention that, of course, the level above the senior officials, our elected officials and our elected Chiefs and Grand Chiefs and portfolio Chiefs.

A formal bilateral Concept Document has been shared with the Grand Chiefs. The bilateral Concept Document confirms the commitment of the Government of Alberta and Alberta First Nations to work together. That is a bi-level agreement, and it has been presented to the Chiefs and, as I understand, will be reviewed at the AOTC next week. The Minister has been invited to the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs on June 9<sup>th</sup> to provide an update to the Assembly. The proposed



tripartite agreement structure has been ... I don't have an example of that here, but I can tell you it includes a declaration of intent.

The next is the actual physical MOU. And the third part of the component is the implementation. We talk about transformative change and resourcing. Those are the types of items that we're looking at in the implementation plan, ensuring that we, as my friends from the Provincial Treaty Organizations always remind me, make sure that we have an adequate action plan associated with the MOU so it's not just another piece of paper.

The Government of Canada has accepted the Minister's invitation to join the process, and a bilateral letter of intent will be forwarded.

A two-staged process for the engagement of local service providers is being developed. That is very much in its infancy around the plan. We've had a few iterations and conversations. What I can tell you, I think, on behalf of the Provincial Treaty Organizations, is that there will be engagement of service providers. Clearly, ensuring a good connection with service providers in communities is imperative. Ultimately, those are the folks that have the greatest amount of knowledge of the working daily operations and where some of the service gaps exist. And I believe the intention is to begin that engagement process probably in the early fall.

The path forward ... so formalize a bilateral agreement between the government of Alberta, and Alberta First Nations. The intention there is to really formalize and solidify the joint commitment between Alberta First Nations and the Province and forward the bilateral letter to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Endorsing a declaration of intent is the first step in leading to the development of the MOU.

DFNAs, CFSAs, Treaty area technicians, and other First Nation community-based organizations will be actively engaged and, ultimately, success will be founded on communication, collaboration and cooperation.

So I leave you on that alliteration, the three Cs. Thank you. I'd be happy to take any questions from you.

### Steve MacDonald

The discussion on the MOU was on the agenda of the Protocol Meeting this Tuesday with the Premier. We thought it was a very positive conversation where the Chiefs basically said the June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting is the watershed meeting that will get the momentum back in terms of documentation. What I thought was the most powerful thing was the Premier expressed interest in this work, and the importance of it, and suggested that if we were ready he'd be pleased to be a signatory to an MOU or some document to demonstrate our commitment. I thought that that was very powerful for us.

### Catherine Pennington

It is a critical piece of work, and certainly, we're really honoured to continue to be a part of it. I was a social worker for a number of years, and I definitely see such value in going forward with this ... creating this high level agreement so there's ongoing conversations. It's really sort of formalizing the relationship between all parties, and how they discuss things, putting them forward, and how they manage their relationship. And also the most important thing is the children really, at the end of the day.

### Victor Horseman

Can you comment on the time line? I know I keep asking for that.

### Response: Catherine Pennington

So the time line ... so if I sort of look at where we are now. I think the intention is that the Grand Chiefs will ... or, sorry, the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs will review the concept document and come to some decision about the bilateral agreement on June 9<sup>th</sup>. I think the intention is, or the hope is, to have the Concept

## Update

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Document and bilateral agreement in June of 2011, and with that I think the community engagement would, or the service provider engagement would likely begin in the fall. I think there's a real hope that there would be a Declaration of Intent, or at least a very first stage of the MOU by the fall knowing that the community, the service provider engagement is really imperative. We've heard time and time again, and we all know from experience, if we don't have community input, service provider input, that that's just not going to work, right. Am I on the right track here, Steve?

### Response: Steve MacDonald

To me, Victor, the offer of the Premier to get engaged in this on September 2<sup>nd</sup> is the ability to engage the committee. I hope we have something significant ... the kinds of document he signs, whether a trilateral invitation letter is sent out ... what's our next steps.

### Victor Horseman

Not so much even a time line, but I guess the process is the basis I was trying to get at. Just to plant the seed that so once we have our Declaration of Intent, we have an identifiable process or steps before we actually get to the point of deciding what specifics the MOU will contain. I think, at least in my mind, it's good to have a whole view of where we want to head.

### Chief Gayle Strikes With A Gun

Sorry, just one question. At what point is the information going to be shared? Is that going to part of the next steps?

### Response: Catherine Pennington

At the working group table ... the intergovernmental initiative coordinators and the technicians sit at the table ... have been discussing the need to ensure that there's good communication so there's good awareness amongst all communities of what is going on. There have been presentations made at the AOTC. I believe that the service provider engagement will be the intense push for communication. Is that right, Darlene? You're nodding.

### Darlene Plamonden

Yes, because right now there's actually no formal documents to share. Everything is done in discussion at this point, and it's really difficult to move forward with community engagement until we have INAC formally join the table and we have the funding request approved for the engagement. We haven't seen any formal documents as of yet and so we cannot share much except verbal updates as has been done at the AOTC. The Minister will be presenting the Concept Document to the Chiefs next week at the AOTC. Once the Concept Document is reviewed and/or signed and a letter to Indian Affairs is forwarded inviting them to join the table, we will be in a position to communicate more. Indian Affairs has made a commitment to provide some funding for us to do the community engagement. Once we get that, then we need to go back to the communities and tell them, "Here's what's going on. Nothing's been signed yet. Nothing's been formalized and we are still in the preliminary stages." The Community Engagement component will allow us to do a lot of communicating about the Agreement.

## Future Governance Meetings

### Steve MacDonald

Thank you for all your support, Catherine, on this very, very important initiative.

I think we're getting near the end. We have one last agenda item. Sarah, you have been very patient as we adjusted the agenda again and again. This piece of the agenda really is about "so where do we go from here." You heard the Minister share her sense that with changes in October she may not be here. It was her ask of us to keep the momentum ... so we'll turn it over to you, Sarah, to talk about some of your thoughts about how we can continue the momentum and move forward.

### Sarah Potts

When the Minister first handed down word that we were going to have this historic meeting last June 17<sup>th</sup>, the Planning Committee was organized in early spring of last year. And that was made up of the provincial Co-Chairs and DFNAs from each Treaty area; and we moved very quickly. We also worked with Board Governance Services, and Jennifer Yip Choy has also been instrumental in moving these meetings forward. Under the direction of the Committee, in essence we decided what those common issues were when we first came together last June. Those were the starting points of our discussions that we had last year.

Since then, we've heard today the reports. What we propose to do is continue these meetings as the Minister is supporting them. The Deputy is supporting our move to ... our decision to move forward. It's not a decision that we've made. It's a decision that's been made by the bodies that are represented at this table.

What we propose is that we would meet in each Treaty area because the DFNAs, CEOs and the Co-Chairs are already meeting. The Chiefs have been meeting. I'm hearing from the DFNA representatives that there is a disconnect in those conversations. By having those people all at the table, there will be a communication

flowing back and forth that we all seem to identify as a challenge and as an impediment. We're hoping that forum will bring those necessary conversations together. We're proposing that we would meet as early as October, late October/early November, in those individual Treaty areas. So Treaty 8 would meet; Treaty 6 and 7 would meet, along with the CFSAs in those regions, the DFNAs in those regions.

The Planning Committee will continue to meet, along with Board Governance Services and hopefully Jennifer will continue to be part of the Planning Committee. We propose that we would meet next year as an assembly. So all of the people come together next ... we're hoping probably by September/October. So it would be a gathering of all of those bodies together. But we also need to be cognizant that we all have different roles and responsibilities. Roles of governors and roles of operations people are different. We need to respect those lines.

We need to formalize this process. I believe the task of the Planning Committee right away is to formalize this process so we have expected roles and responsibilities, expected outcomes, and an evaluation process. Are we really doing or meeting those targets that we set out for ourselves? I'm very hopeful that we can continue in the spirit with which these meetings were initiated. I'm going to ask Theresa to speak as my DFNA partner. If any of the Committee members wish to speak ...

### Theresa Bull

Actually, what I wanted to say was that I'd like to suggest that the DFNA Chairs should meet regularly to share best practices, collaborate, and share information because I think that ... and I think Sarah alluded to that ... is that's where the DFNAs, the Chairs, and the CEOs meet. The Chairs, I don't think, meet regularly as a group. I would like to see that happen because right now it seems the CEOs are doing their work; the Chiefs are doing their work; but the Chairs are not a part of the discussions. In order for the collaboration

## Future Governance Meetings

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to continue and best practices to continue, we all need to work together and we need to know what's going on because if we don't, then again silos get built. I think that's what we want to get away from with Children's Services. We all have the same concerns and the same ideas of what we want to accomplish. I know with AKO ... and somebody asked me today, "How do you say your name?" I said, "That's not my name. That's the name of the organization. And it's Akamkispitawin Ohpikihawasowin." Montana and Louis Bull formed the AKO organization, and it's Montana Louis Bull Child Rearing and that was started in 1994.

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**In order for the collaboration to continue and best practices to continue, we all need to work together ...**

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So at this point in time and because of ... I watch the news, and there's an attack on the Ministry with the deaths in the organization. I think that we all need to work together. Everybody needs to be on the same page and everybody going in the same direction. We all have children in care and we all want the best for our children. And the goal in AKO is that we want to bring our children home and to be raised in a community, but there's a lot of policies and other limitations that we have to overcome. But we also have to work together as organizations and as a team at AKO. That's all I wanted to say.

### **Louise Charach, Co-Chair, Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services**

I'm a new member of the Planning Committee, and I'm looking forward to implementing what Sarah has put forward here. I think the next steps are in place. And what I'm getting to know about Sarah is that things move along, so I'm optimistic that we'll be hearing more about the next steps soon.

A few months ago I watched this documentary called "Waiting for Superman" and it's a documentary and it's about the education system in the U.S. One of the major spokespersons was a superintendent and he was talking a bit about how the film was entitled. And he said when he was a young boy he was poor. He was black. He was raised by a single parent. He had a lot of troubles and issues in his life. But as a young boy, he always knew that Superman was somewhere. Superman would rescue him. Superman would help him. Superman would be there for him. And then while still a young boy, his mother told him one day that there was no such thing as a Superman, and he felt devastated. He felt the ground had moved from under him. And he spent a lot of time thinking about what was he going to do now that he didn't have to wait for Superman. And then, as he got a little bit older, he realized that he had to be Superman. And I think that's where we have come to and our opportunity is that we are all Superman here in the room, and maybe our time is now.

### **Sarah Potts**

So I would like some feedback, for consensus, a show of support ... that we move forward, continue. I don't want to lose momentum.

### **Marcel Weasel Head, Chair, Blood Tribe Child Protection Services**

I think it's important to continue. We share the same issues in all First Nations. And I think it's important that we listen to one another. It's been too long, and we want to take ownership of some of the problems and issues. I've been involved in these discussion. But I think I'd like to see as well, too, what is it we want to accomplish. By today's question, I think we should perhaps continue because it's our kids who are out there.

## Ann Nipshank

I was just going to talk a bit about the DFNAs and how Darlene with the technical working group. ... So with that, and you're proposed to go out to communities and gather feedback from the DFNAs, that's what you're speaking of, right?



Ann Nipshank

## Darlene Plamonden

I agree with what Sarah is proposing because there is a disconnect. You have your CEOs over here. Then you have your DFNAs and CFSAs here but they all represent the same powers, the same members, the same communities, so I agree with the idea of having the specific DFNAs and CEOs, CFSAs and Treaty 6, and Treaty 7 and Treaty 8 and having one big meeting.

## Ronald Wickson, Co-Chair, Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services Authority

Sarah, I don't know whether this is exactly what you're looking for, but speaking on behalf of our CFSA, we are formally supportive of this entire process and I think it's a wonderful initiative. I think there's going to be some issues develop and there's going to be some road blocks and there's going to be some disappointments from time to time but the fact of the matter is, this is one of the best things that's happened in a very long time.

## Round Table Discussion

### Steve MacDonald

On behalf of the department, thank you for your support. These meetings are a good example of what we can accomplish when we work together. I am really pleased to hear you say we need to come together and make sure we do the things we need because a lot is expected of us. The communities expect a lot of us. We need to work together and I really appreciate the Planning Committee making sure there are some common understanding of the sort of issues we should be looking at here at these tables.

That said, though, I think we have a few minutes to see if there's anything we haven't covered that we need to put on the table or if there is just a comment that's in your heart or in your mind you'd like to share.

### Chief James Ahnassay

Just a question on the Treaty area meetings that's being proposed. Is it going to be the same set of meetings in each of the Treaty areas? In the Treaty area like in Treaty 8 we have a fairly large area and each of the Treaty areas have the same too. I'm just wondering whether one meeting would be enough. Maybe if two or three in each Treaty area could be set up, it would be a lot better than just one. We, from High Level, if it's in Edmonton, it's far away, especially if there's to be the opportunity for the local DFNAs and CFSAs to attend.

### Rose Lameman

I am very thankful that the DFNAs are making the meeting with everything else that's going on. My concern is only one of the Chiefs brought it up here today that Bands who do not have DFNAs or any authority to move forward. So I'm thinking those independent Bands don't have any delegation or authority. I don't know what the picture looks like for those Bands who don't have DFNAs, and how they're going to be dealt with. And I'm sure they're invited.

Whether they attend or not is another concern. So that's the only question I have.

### Elder Eva Cardinal

I would like to first say, Deputy Steve, although there has been a great deal of productive sharing that has taken place today, this afternoon, I am still touched and also very thoughtful about experiences that we ... and I say we ... we all observe, which are really trials. We, in the last few days, have heard voice of a young child whose spirit maker and there are also the ones of the parents who are out there. I hear it mentioned every once in a while, which I have observed immediately where the parents, mothers who experienced their babies who were taken away from them directly at birth at the hospital.



Elder Albert Black Water

I am thinking also, perhaps it would also be beneficial to bring about an awareness training to these people that are staffing situations. My mind is still at the place where my thought goes, "Oh, there goes the authority again. Oh, the authoritative measure, the authoritative behaviour, the authoritative attitude." I say that because I have had that experience and I was at a total loss to speak to these particular people and it was then that they had shared policy. "It's our policy." And the lady that mentioned that policy, I am thoughtful about that too.

## Round Table Discussion

I am fortunate, though, that my *chapans* are well, I must say. I really have to say that. They are well looked after. They're not on our reserve. And I get a chance to visit them and that's a plus for me. But what Charlene Houle-White mentioned, that the mother's gone. She will never have that embrace. And a lot of our children will never have that embrace of their mothers and their fathers. I was the one who visited the *chapans*. And I was the first one to give them that hug. I encouraged that. I am anxious to be able to hear the outcome of them.

In this room we can encourage our young ones. And I guess I look at our Band, our reserve, they have a number of programs, a number of areas of self-enhancement programs, mainly women who are attending these programs to better themselves. I purposely brought myself to those groups every once in a while.

The best part, and I like this, Steve, and I like you being our Deputy Minister, you being here, listening to us, taking that time to hear everyone's voice. And that's the purpose.

I go and sit down with these parents. They are hurting. They are hurting. I also go and visit the group homes. I am new to this particular service. I serve on the board, serve as an Elder on the board of Children's Services in Saddle Lake, but I see these parents, their spirit is just so ragged. And I see the spirit of these children whose spirit is so fragile and although they are not my children, because I'm old, they call me *kokum*. That's



Audrey Franklin

another thing about our people in Indian country. When they see an old person, somehow they respect relationships. In Indian country, relationship is so very important, and it just comes automatically for my people.

And you know what, Steve, keep up the good work. And Yvonne as well. You're doing a good job.

### Del Graff, Child and Youth Advocate

Thank you for the opportunity. Today is day three of my being in Alberta and there isn't a better place I could have spent this day than here. Tremendous amount of learning ... I've been listening very intensely and can hear some challenges, can hear some progress, but certainly hear some very clear intention to try to improve services for the children. I am very full of thoughts. I'm very grateful to be here today.

### Steve MacDonald

Another full day. I really want to thank everybody for sharing their advice around this table, especially thanking our Elders. Elder Eva, we're spending too much time together. People are starting to talk. Elder Albert, thank you very much and I know you came on very short notice. It was a real pleasure to meet Elder Alvena. I think her optimism for the future is very encouraging.

Everyone's attendance here is so critical. I appreciate that you stayed here to the bitter end. The fact that we had so many Chiefs here is so important. I know how busy you are. It's very much appreciated.

Now I'm not going to go on for a long time. To me, it was an Elder at one of our DFNA Directors and CEO meetings who talked about ... that we need trust, faith and heart to generate success. That's in this room. You know that.

I think we've got the right things to do. I think the Band Designate is a powerful symbol of how we move

## Round Table Discussion

forward. I think those recommendations are the right recommendations. Cultural training ... that's going to be a long road to travel, so we need to start that walk now even if it may not be perfect. In terms of the next steps, it's the right thing to do. We'll learn and write the book as we move forward.

I'm glad we brought the Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention here. That shows you that we can't just treat the symptoms; that is, we just need to hire a few more Aboriginals. We need to take the right steps to address the systemic and fundamental issues and take the time and energy to get it right. We talk about transformational change ... that was a powerful example of what we were talking about.

The MOU, on a personal level, has been a bit of a roller coaster. The good news is the commitment around this table and other tables to do the right thing for the kids and the families will carry us all through the protocol and the process frustrations because we know, in the end, we're going to make a difference in a lot of kids' lives.

I'm so glad we have everything we have around this table. With this Minister, there's no one more dedicated to the issue. There's no one more committed to making things happen. She pushes us every single day, and she is not one to be just cutting ribbons or writing reports. She wants to make a difference, to make things happen. She's been an incredible leader. I'm so glad we're able to take advantage of all her energy and commitment and passion. I recall one of her colleagues saying this is one of the toughest jobs; and it is. And yet she does it with a lot of respect. She wants to make a difference and doesn't let the roadblocks or the papers or the television cameras distract her from doing the right thing. It's been a real pleasure working with her and I know that she will continue to support us.

I talked about trust, faith and heart, so my point is we need to have one more thing ... action. We've got a good agenda. I like to say we've admired the problem

around the table, but we've also got some very solid recommendations around the table. My commitment to you, the governors, is that we will take action.

As I said to the CEOs, DFNA directors, and non-delegated Bands, "You don't need the Deputy to tell you to do this. Go do it. You know it's the right thing to do. You make the arrangements. If you need our support, you need resources, you need executive help, we'll be there. We have to get on with it." And so I'll close by saying ... Louise said about waiting for Superman, and I think that's exactly the point. We're the ones who are going to carry this. We have the wisdom keepers and the Elders shared that with us. We're the wisdom seekers. Now we need to be the wisdom doers. So we will do those things that we've talked about.

Sarah has laid on the table a path forward to keep this bond, this table, this conversation alive. And to do that, we've got incredible work by the technicians. Now the opportunity's there. Let's grab it.

Thank you all very much, and a very safe journey home. And I'll call on Elder Albert to do the closing prayer, please.

### Elder Albert Blackwater

Before I say a prayer I just want to thank all of you for your hard work. I see a lot of good stuff coming up. It's very good. Keep up the good work.





## Next Steps

Following the presentations on the Role of the Band Designate, the Review of Cultural Training, the Memorandum of Understanding and the discussion on Future Governance Meetings, the Ministry has committed to the following:

### 1 Role of the Band Designate:

- (a) Finalize with Chief and councils and all Band Designates, the role, responsibilities, and qualifications of the Band Designate.

**Timeframe: By the end of December 2011**

- (b) Develop the required training for Band Designates and others. The training will dovetail with the cultural competency training and will be developed after the Band Designate role, responsibilities and qualifications have been finalized.

**Timeframe: By September 2012**

- Develop materials to be used for training and dissemination to parents and children.

**Timeframe: By December 2012**

- (c) Develop a strategy for delivery of training - to be determined in collaboration with Directors of DFNAs and CEOs of CFSAs.
- (d) Roll out of training to Band Designates and all agency staff.

**Timeframe: By December 2012**

### 2 Cultural Competency Training

- Develop a detailed implementation plan that would address short and longer term strategies including resources.

Phase I:

- (a) Develop a cultural framework that:

- Outlines the vision.

- Guides the development of standards, child intervention policies and programs and evaluation processes.

- (b) Design and develop the cultural competency program:

- Ensure program delivery is aligned with principles and practices of adult education.
- Engage DFNAs, CFSAs, Métis staff to help coordinate local participation and to participate in program development.

**Note:** Throughout the process, ensure meaningful engagement of all stakeholders.

**Timeframe: By December 2012**

Phase 2 will begin after the completion of Phase 1.

### 3 Memorandum of Understanding

- (a) Approval and signing of the Concept Document between Treaty 6, 7 & 8 and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and Aboriginal Affairs.

**Timeframe: August 2011**

- (b) Declaration of Intent

**Timeframe: September 2011**

- (c) Community Engagement

**Timeframe: To be by November 2011**

### 4 Future Governance Meetings

- (a) Determine, in conjunction with the Planning Committee
- The timing of meetings and attendees; and
  - The number of meetings and the process for organizing and facilitating the meetings.

**Timeframe: By October 2011**

# Appendix 1: Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse & Neglect

## Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse & Neglect - 2008:

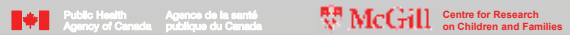
### Selected findings & implications

*Nico Trocmé, McGill University*  
*Barbara Fallon, University of Toronto*  
*Bruce MacLaurin, University of Calgary*  
*Vandna Sinha, McGill University*  
*Sonia Hélie, Centre jeunesse de Montréal IU*  
*Daniel Turcotte, Université Laval*



## Acknowledgments

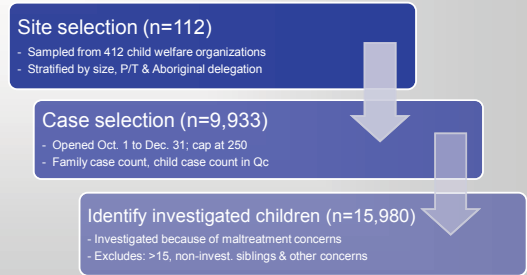
- Funding:
  - Core funding: PHAC
  - BC, AB, SK, ON, QC & MB;
  - Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (through PHAC);
  - Grants: CFI, SSHRC; NAMHR, NCCAH, RBC, UT, McGill
- In kind support:
  - 2,000 child welfare workers, managers & admin staff
  - 30 researchers from Universities, Governments & Agencies
  - Injury and Child Maltreatment Section, Health Surveillance & Epidemiology Division (PHAC)
  - PHAC National Steering Committee & First Nations Advisory Committee



## CIS-2008 Sample



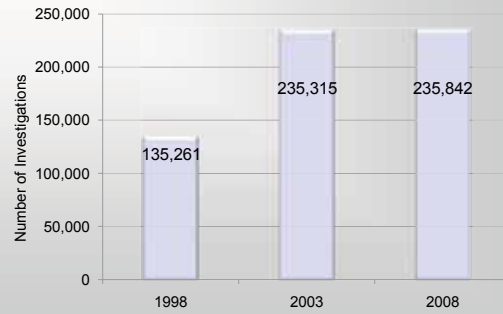
## CIS-2008 Sample



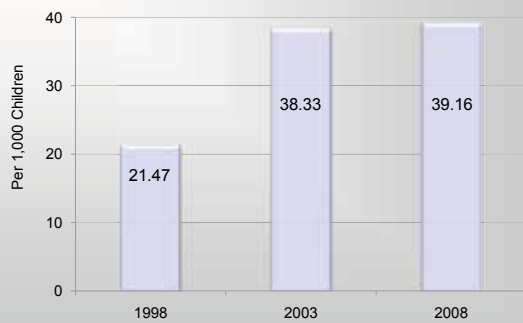
## Methodological Considerations

- Limited to reports investigated by child welfare
- Information collected directly from investigating child welfare workers
- No post-investigation follow-up
- Not designed to evaluate services
- Methodological changes across cycles
- Weighted national annual estimates

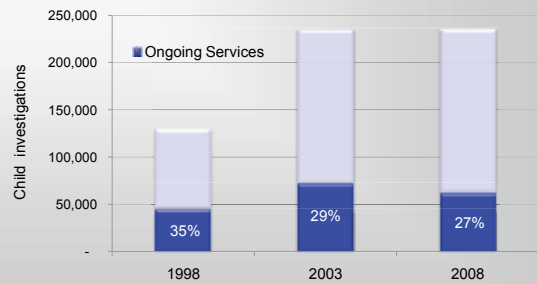
## Number of Maltreatment-Related Investigations: CIS-98, 03 & 08



## Incidence of Maltreatment-Related Investigations: CIS-98, 03 & 08

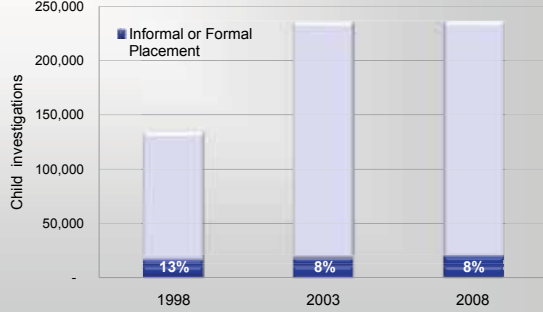


## Ongoing Services Following an Investigation: CIS-98, 03 & 08



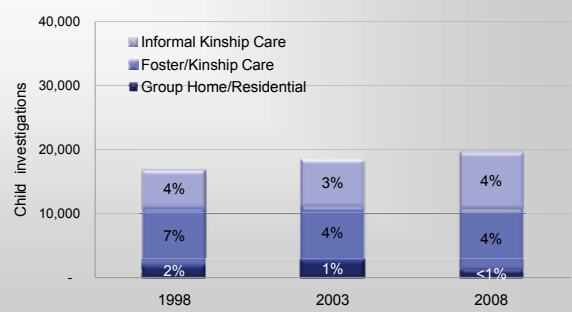
Appendix 1

Formal & Informal Out-of-Home Placements in Maltreatment Investigations: CIS-98, 03 & 08



Public Health Agency of Canada / Agence de la santé publique du Canada | McGill Centre for Research on Children and Families

Primary Form of Formal & Informal Out-of-Home Placements: CIS-98, 03 & 08



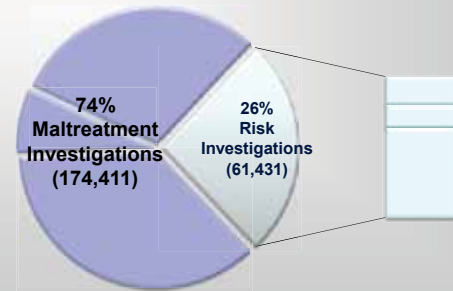
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Disentangling Maltreatment Investigations from Risk Assessments

- Maltreatment investigations determine if an incident of abuse or neglect has occurred.
- Risk only investigations determine likelihood of future maltreatment, no specific concern about past incidents

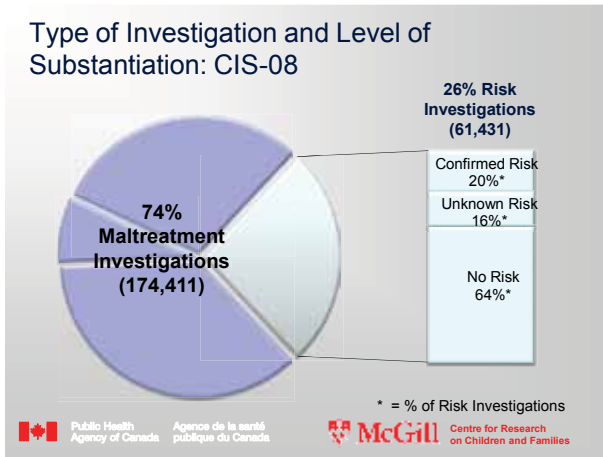
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Type of Investigation and Level of Substantiation: CIS-08

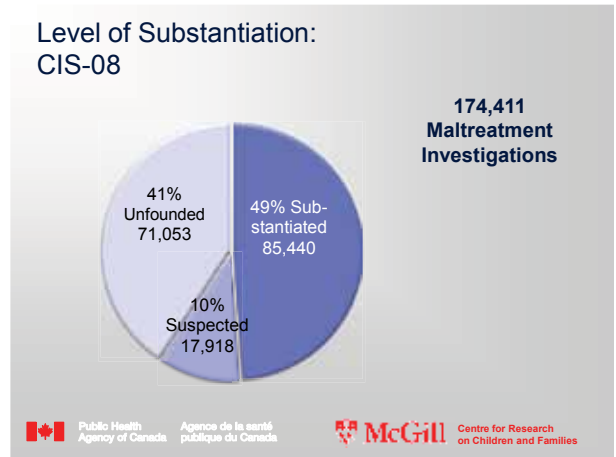


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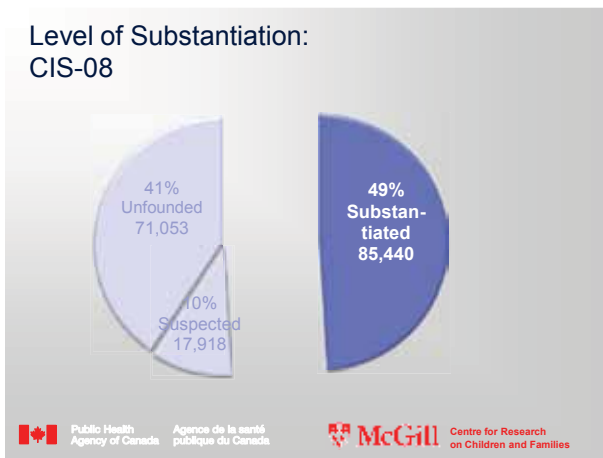
Type of Investigation and Level of Substantiation: CIS-08



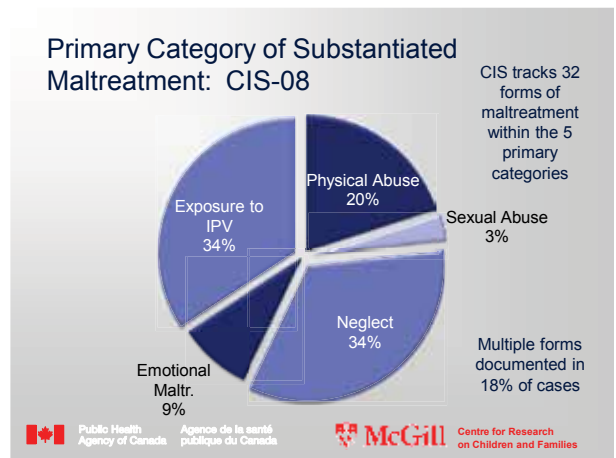
Level of Substantiation: CIS-08



Level of Substantiation: CIS-08

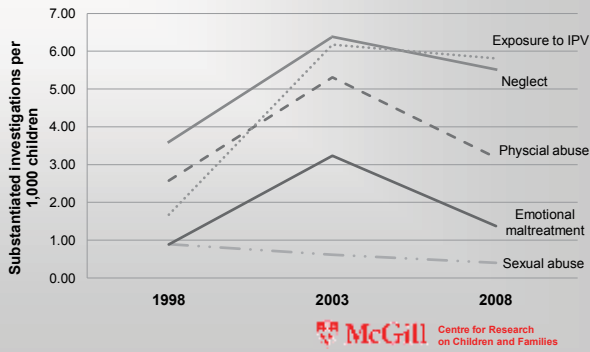


Primary Category of Substantiated Maltreatment: CIS-08

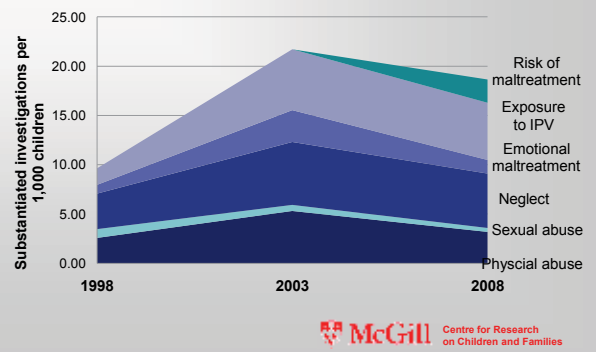


Appendix 1

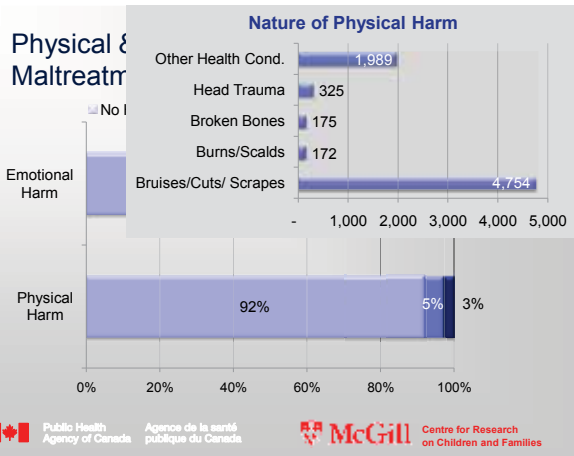
Primary category of substantiated investigation in Canada CIS 98, 03 & 08 (Qc excl.)



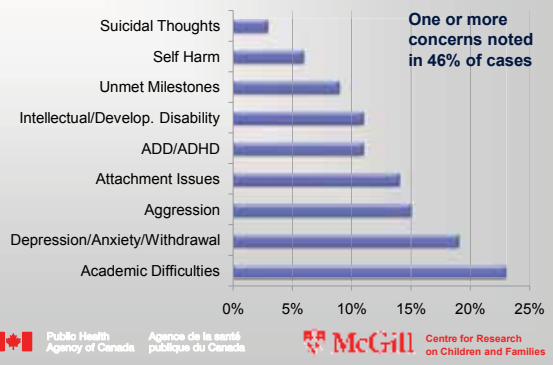
Primary category of substantiated investigation in Canada CIS 98, 03 & 08 (Qc excl.)



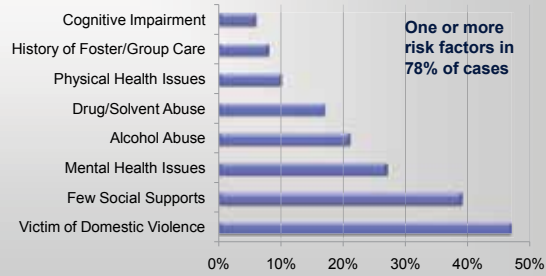
Physical & Emotional Maltreatment



Child Functioning, Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations: CIS-08

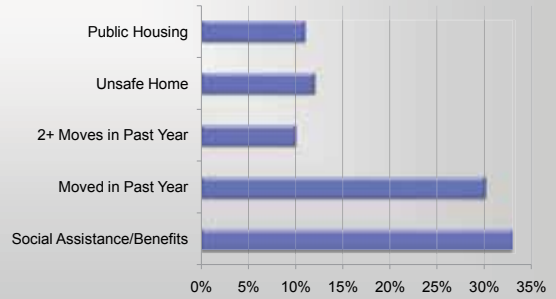


### Primary Caregiver Risk Factors, Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations: CIS-08



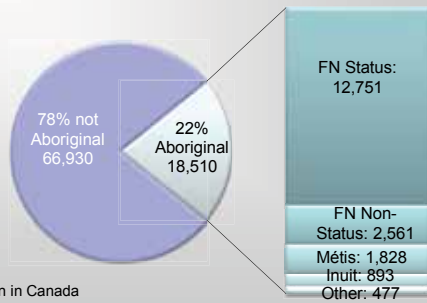
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### Household Characteristics, Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations: CIS-08c



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### Aboriginal Heritage of Children, Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations: CIS-08



6% of children in Canada are Aboriginal

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### Next Steps

- Analyses:
  - Oversampling reports, FN, BC, AB, SK, ON & QC
  - Unpack the 1998, 2003 & 2008 trends
  - Analyses by form and severity of maltreatment
  - Examination of changes in worker profile
  - Exploration of the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children
  - Analyses of substantiation, service, placement and court decisions
  - Support for jurisdictional and inter-jurisdictional analyses
- Dissemination
- Evaluation of CIS-2008
- Planning for the next cycle

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## Appendix 1

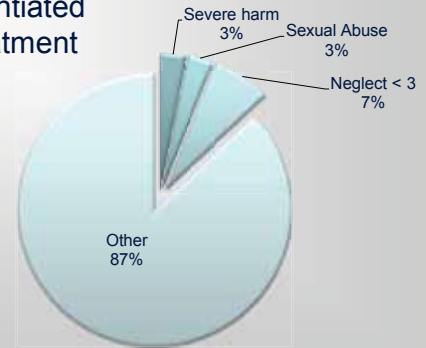
### Some implications

- Rates of reports have increased dramatically, partially a result of greater understanding of the impact of maltreatment.
- Has child welfare practice kept pace?

Public Health Agency of Canada  
Injury and Child Maltreatment Section  
Health Surveillance and Epidemiology Division

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### Substantiated maltreatment



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### The other 87%...

- At risk of harm?
- or
- Endangered development & well-being

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### Safety & well-being paramount principles in child welfare legislation across Canada

- **British Columbia:** *the safety and well-being of children are the paramount considerations...*
- **Alberta:** *survival, security or development of the child is endangered*
- **Newfoundland:** *every child is entitled to be assured of personal safety, health and well-being..*
- **NWT:** *the paramount objective of this act is to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children.*
- **New Brunswick:** *protective care" means a service which provides an immediate safeguard for a child's security and development/*
- **Saskatchewan:** *The purpose of this act is to promote the well-being of children in need of protection...*
- **Quebec:** *loi s'applique à un enfant dont la sécurité ou le développement est ou peut être considéré comme compromis.*
- **Ontario:** *The paramount purpose of this Act is to promote the best interests, protection and well being of children*
- **Manitoba:** *The best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration...*
- **PEI:** *...the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.*

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## Severity of endangered development

### Children

Language delays  
Aggressiveness  
Attention disorders  
Anxiety/depression  
Educational delays  
Early drop-out  
Limited involvement in sports  
Tobacco & alcohol consumption for some  
Social isolation & marginalization  
Multiple moves and school changes

### Parents & families

Extreme poverty  
Single parents  
Mental health problems  
Substance abuse  
Spousal violence  
Social isolation & mistrust  
Feeling of parental incompetence  
Limited support for school activities  
Limited community involvement  
Poor self-esteem

## Differentiating between urgent protection and chronic need

- Confounding **urgent protection** and **chronic need** puts both groups of children at further risk
- **Severe Maltreatment:** Keep developing better investigative methods and develop treatments to address the sequelae of severe maltreatment
- **Chronic family problems:** Strengthen differential assessments and develop better coordination with community and specialized services to address such problems

## Can we move beyond the Battered Child Syndrome?

*It's not that we don't know that neglect is bad for kids. We even know that it can be really bad, worse than abuse sometimes and in some ways. The data make that pretty clear. The difficulty lies in engendering a passionate commitment and with that the attention and resources that are necessary to effect change. There is something about abuse; that it is acts not omissions, that it is intentional not inadvertent, that it is discrete not diffuse, that it is brutal not insidious, that makes it so evocative not only to professionals but society at large.*

**Lucy Berliner** (1994), The Problem With Neglect, Commentary. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 9 (4), 556

## Thank You!

**CIS:** nico.trocme@mcgill.ca  
**ON:** barbara.fallon@utoronto.ca  
**SK/AB/BC:** bmaclaur@ucalgary.ca  
**FN:** vandna.sinha@mcgill.ca  
**QC:** daniel.turcotte@svs.ulaval.ca  
[www.cwrp.ca](http://www.cwrp.ca)

**PHAC:** child.maltreatment@phac-aspc.gc.ca  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cm-vee/index-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cm-vee/index-eng.php)

## Appendix 2: Role of the Band Designate

### Role of the First Nations Band Designate June 3, 2011

Karen English, Director, Piikani Child and Family Services  
Lonnie Slezina, Chief Executive Officer  
Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services Authority

### Our Process

- Deputy Minister's meeting on March 23 with DFNA Directors, First Nations receiving services from CFSAs, CEOs of CFSAs and Aboriginal Initiatives staff to continue discussion on role of the Designate
- Treaty Area/Regional meetings between March 23 and May 11 to continue discussion on role of the Designate
- Deputy Minister's Meeting on May 11 to conclude discussions

Note: Elders were in attendance at all meetings

### Our Process

We feel we now have

1. A clear process/steps to ensure meaningful involvement of the Designate in case planning for a First Nations child;
2. Clarification and understanding of the role of the Designate;
3. Ways in which the CFSA staff and Designate might assist one another in fulfilling their responsibilities with respect to the legislation; and
4. Actions required so that the Designate and CFSA staff have the tools to be effective in carrying out their responsibilities.

### Our Process

- Governance Meeting - today
  - To report to you - our Chairs and Co-Chairs - on our process and progress
  - To seek your input

5

### Guiding Principles

1. The best interest of the child is paramount at all times.
2. Accepting and respecting that the child's connections with family, community and culture is essential to the child's sense of identity.
3. Trust, faith and heart form the foundation of working together in the best interest of the child.
4. Engaging families early in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard in the case planning for the child.

6

### Guiding Principles

5. Representing and promoting the Treaty Rights, and culture of the First Nation child.
6. Acknowledging the importance of collective rights in Aboriginal communities.
7. Balancing individual and collective rights so that the best interest of the child is placed first.

7

### Relationship Building

- Demonstrate respect for each other's roles and responsibilities
- Explore ways Designates and CFSAs can build stronger relationships through activities such as meeting regularly
- Develop effective sharing information and communications processes

8

### Responsibilities and Requirements

- Case planning/pathways to connection planning and Advocacy
- Liaison/support
- Confidentiality
- Knowledge
- Skills & Abilities
- Qualifications
- Training

## Appendix 2

9

### Next Steps

#### Legislation, Policy and Definitions

1. Ensuring confidentiality provisions with the Designate.
2. Identifying key components of a cultural plan.
3. Obtaining consent and access to information.
4. Reviewing legislation to ensure that Designates and CFSA staff have the ability to perform the duties required of their positions.

10

### Next Steps

#### Information Management

- Modify ISIS to have a check box recording that the Designate has been engaged. (*Can now be done through the contact log*)
- Update the Designate list and upload it into Worklinks.
- Move the First Nations tab from the sidebar to the top bar on Worklinks.
- Implement a process to ensure the Designate list is kept current.

11

### Next Steps

#### Training and Information Sharing

1. Communicate the importance and role of the Designate to Chief and Councils and the requirements for the Designate to be qualified for the position.
2. Develop a handbook/guide regarding the role of the Designate and the CFSA.
3. Prepare a pamphlet on role of the Designate for distribution to children, youth, parents and others.
4. Hold information session/orientation for Chief and Councils.

12

### Next Steps

5. Provide ongoing training for CFSA and DFNA staff and the Designate that clarifies the role of the Designate, how to engage the Designate, legislated responsibility, how to obtain informed consent, etc.
6. Offer cultural competency training for both DFNA and CFSA staff.
7. Have ongoing training for caregivers on the role of the Designate.
8. Provide training at the leadership level in the Ministry, including senior managers, executives, supervisors, and CEOs.

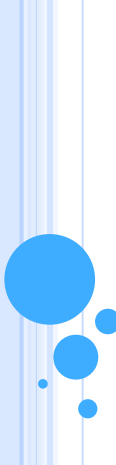
13

## Next Steps

### Resourcing

- Develop a business case regarding funding the role of the Designate, including training needs (to be resolved between the provincial and federal governments and First Nations).

## Appendix 3: Review of Cultural Training



**CULTURAL TRAINING REVIEW**  
**JUNE 3, 2011**

Fred Anderson, Director  
Delegated First Nations Agency Supports  
Child Intervention, Program Quality and Supports  
Joey Hamelin, Senior Manager  
Delegated First Nations Agency Supports

**WHY THE REVIEW**

- June 2010 - inaugural gathering of Chairs of Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs), representatives of First Nations served by Child and Family Services Authorities and Co-Chairs of Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs)
- September 2010 - Deputy Minister's meeting of DFNA Directors, CFSAs CEOs, representatives of First Nations served by CFSAs
  - We heard that cultural training was needed.

2

**PROCESS**

- In November 2010, Broadview Applied Research Group was contracted to complete a review
  - To determine what training is currently provided.
  - To identify gaps between current programming and what key stakeholders and research in promising practices deem necessary.

3

**PROCESS**

- Information was gathered using a variety of methods:
  - consultations
  - stakeholder interviews
  - questionnaires
  - a review and analysis of related documents and reports
- Elders, youth, DFNAs, CFSAs, representatives of First Nations, Métis staff and other Ministry staff were involved.

4

### CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND CULTURAL SAFETY

- Cultural Competence - behaviours, attitudes and policies that allow us to work effectively with various racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups.
- Cultural Safety - the majority culture creates an environment that allows the minority culture to thrive.

6

### CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND CULTURAL SAFETY

- Cultural competence creates cultural safety - people from minority cultures are able to thrive in the majority culture without losing their own indigenous culture.
- Achieving a culturally competent system requires re-aligning of behaviours, attitudes and practices with policies and planning.

6

### WHAT WE LEARNED

- We need reflective practice - practice that demonstrates understanding, appreciation and respect for different worldviews, protocols, and cultural traditions.
- We need cultural competence - knowing and valuing a different way of understanding the world.
- We need a cultural framework.
- We need training that is localized, addresses the uniqueness of respective community and its protocols and allows for direct experience.

7

### WHAT WE LEARNED

- Module 5 of the Delegation Training is considered by many to be the only Ministry-sanctioned cultural training.
  - Three-day workshop - governance structures, legal status of Aboriginal peoples, factors that may impact casework practice, approaches and protocols for establishing relationships with Aboriginal families and communities.
  - Our delegation training is not cultural training.

8

## Appendix 3

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**Culture is:**

- Who we are
- Beliefs, values and traditions
- Identity
- History - since time immemorial
- Spirituality
- Language
- Natural Laws
- Connections with family and community
- Land

9

### ELDERS' VOICE:

- Prayer is culture
- Life is about being gentle and about loving and praying for our children
- Sharing our traditional ceremonies from generation to generation
- Must recognize the unique and distinct culture of each First Nation (diversity)
- Recognize Métis culture
- Humility and respect

10

### YOUTH TOLD US:

**Culture:**

- Is our identity and pride
- Is where we belong
- Is spiritual ceremonies
- Is kindness and respect
- Prevents criminal activity
- Prevents suicide

11

### OTHERS TOLD US:

**Action is needed:**

- Develop a cultural policy framework
- Ensure Aboriginal children have a cultural plan
- Involve Elders and community to develop cultural training
- Involve First Nations / Métis in the delivery of cultural training specific to their community

12



### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a cultural framework.
2. Develop a program that promotes cultural competence.
3. Ensure that program delivery is aligned with principles and practices of adult education.
4. Conduct an evaluation on impacts of training on casework practice, system and policy changes.
5. Identify the audience required for training.
6. Commit to resources to support the design, delivery and assessment of a cultural competency program.

13

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The following three phases have been identified:  
Phase I:
  - Develop a cultural framework that:
    - Outlines the vision.
    - Guides the development of standards, child intervention policies and programs and evaluation processes with meaningful engagement of stakeholders.

14

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Design and develop the cultural competency program:
  - Ensure program delivery is aligned with principles and practices of adult education.
  - Engage DFNAs, CFSAs, Métis staff to help coordinate local participation and to participate in program development.

15

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Phase II:
- Deliver the cultural competency program:
    - Recruit local community leaders/experts to share insights and knowledge and become mentors to participants in the cultural competency program.
    - Recruit agencies or organizations to help conduct instruction. Individuals from the DFNAs or CFSAs may be involved at the local level to supervise the program.

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## Appendix 3

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

Phase III:

- Evaluate the outcomes:
  - Conduct an evaluation via a framework that is sensitive to Aboriginal research methodologies and collaborative, community-based assessments.

## Appendix 4: Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention



Appendix 4: Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention

### **“Opening the Circle” Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Community of Practice Initiative June 3, 2011**

**Presented by:**  
Elder Alvena Strasbourg  
Cathy Cloughton, Senior Manager, Workforce Planning  
Sangeeta Sicking, Manager, Organizational Support Initiatives



### **Background**

- ❖ Reasoning behind the initiative
- ❖ Why a Community of Practice approach
- ❖ Mission of the Initiative
- ❖ Who is part of our Leadership Team and our Community
- ❖ Evidence-based, focused on action
- ❖ Supports recommendations from the Child Intervention Review
- ❖ Building on the work of PAAC



### **What have we done to date?**


- ❖ Conducted Focus Groups with Ministry Aboriginal Staff
- ❖ Reviewed research, literature and best practices
- ❖ On-going building of relationships, making new connections
- ❖ Conducted three Community Working Sessions
  - Planning four more Community Working Sessions
- ❖ Presented to key stakeholder groups
- ❖ Researched Aboriginal Employment survey alternatives
- ❖ Developed the Recommendations Framework
  - “Transformational Change in Relationships”



### **Next Steps**


- ❖ Leadership Team to identify key short term and long term recommendations to be championed in the Ministry (July 2011)
- ❖ Feedback to be obtained from key stakeholder groups re: identified recommendations (July – September 2011)
- ❖ Presentation of the identified recommendations to Ministry Executive Team (late Fall 2011)
- ❖ Development of comprehensive Implementation, Communication and Change Management Plans

## Appendix 4



### The Recommendations Framework

- ❖ **Big Building Blocks** = Longer term recommendations to change relationships → Transformational change to the system as a whole
- ❖ **Small Steps** = Shorter term recommendations to start building the smaller blocks
- ❖ **Our lens** = "Is this an idea that will deepen cultural understanding of each other and how we relate to each other?"




### Example Recommendations from our Community of Practice

- ❖ Development of a cultural policy framework is necessary \*
- ❖ The Ministry Recruitment Process should be significantly revised
- ❖ Ministry staff must experience the Aboriginal culture to appreciate and value it *"They have to sit with us and get to know us"* \*
- ❖ Opportunities should be created for DFNA and CFSA to trade places \*
- ❖ Risk assessment approaches and tools need to be revised in order to be more culturally appropriate \*
- ❖ The Ministry should develop an Aboriginal Mentorship Program, an Aboriginal Internship Program and an Aboriginal Leadership Program

*\* These example recommendations are quoted from the Cultural Training Review, or are echoed in this review and they are in essence, the same recommendations made by our Community.*

*There is significant synchronicity in what we are hearing from both initiatives...*



### What have we learned?

- ❖ The initiative required broader scope and community engagement to examine deeper issues and identify successful strategies
- ❖ Current approach to focus on recruitment is short-sighted
  - Identification and removal of systemic barriers in the Ministry will be critical
- ❖ Positive policies and practices will need to be implemented to ensure Aboriginal workers achieve a degree of fair representation at all levels in the organization
- ❖ "Reflective practice is needed - practice that demonstrates understanding, appreciation and respect for different worldviews, protocols, and cultural traditions...cultural training is not enough" \*
  - This has a significant impact on retention of Aboriginal staff

*\* Quoted from the Cultural Training Review*



### What have we learned?

**Cultural competence of an organization *"isn't about cultural sensitivity training for the worker ... It has to be about the system as a whole; the policy development, the practice, the way we organize, all of those things must be infused with cultural sensitivity"***  
(Steve MacDonald, Deputy Minister, 2010)

*Comment quoted from the Cultural Training Review and echoed in this initiative*



### **What difference will this initiative make?**

- ❖ If we have more Aboriginal staff, we can offer more culturally appropriate services
  - Leading to better outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families
- ❖ Creating an organization of cultural competence will benefit all minorities and cultures
- ❖ Improving our recruitment process will also benefit all cultures
- ❖ Aboriginal people are the fastest growing population in Canada....they are our future talent pool
  - We need to create an environment and system that values and incorporates Aboriginal culture

## Appendix 5: Memorandum of Understanding

### Memorandum of Understanding

June 3, 2011

Meeting Participants:  
Minister Yvonne Fritz  
Deputy Minister Steve MacDonald  
Chairs, Delegated First Nations Agencies  
Co-Chairs, Child and Family Services Authorities  
Child and Family Services Representatives  
First Nations Representatives

### Background

- Protocol Agreement – May 2008
  - signed by the Premier, Minister, Grand Chiefs and Vice-Chiefs
  - contemplates the establishment of further specific consultation processes, sub-tables and sub-agreements
- Treaty Chiefs Resolution – March 2010
  - establish sub-agreement on Child and Family Services pursuant to the Protocol Agreement

### Background

- *Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children's Future* – June 2010 and November 2010
  - proposed follow up action included a proposal to develop a MOU to "eliminate jurisdictional struggles"
- Child Intervention Review Panel Report – June 2010
  - called for "an ongoing, formal, tripartite process to collaboratively address inequity for First Nations people in the child intervention system"

### Present Situation

- Tripartite MOU Steering Committee and Working Group have been meeting on a regular basis
- Steering Committee members include:
  - Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers, Alberta Children and Youth Services and Aboriginal Relations
  - Chief Executive Officers, Provincial Treaty Organizations for Treaty Areas 6, 7 and 8

### Present Situation

- Working Group members include:
  - ◆ Directors, Alberta Children and Youth Services and Aboriginal Relations
  - ◆ Intergovernmental Initiatives Coordinators & Technicians, Provincial Treaty Organizations for Treaty Areas 6, 7 and 8
- A formal, bilateral Concept Document has been shared with the Grand Chiefs
  - ◆ the bilateral Concept Document confirms the commitment of the Government of Alberta and Alberta First Nations to work together

### Present Situation

- The Minister has been invited to attend the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to provide an MOU update to the Assembly
- Proposed tripartite agreement structure has been developed
- Government of Canada has formally accepted the Minister's invitation to join the process and a bilateral letter of invitation will be forwarded
- A two stage process for the engagement of local service providers is being developed

### Path Forward

- Formalize a bilateral agreement between the Government of Alberta and Alberta First Nations
- Forward the bilateral letter of invitation to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
- Endorse a tripartite Declaration of Intent as a first step leading to the development of a Memorandum of Understanding

## Appendix 6: Evaluation Summary

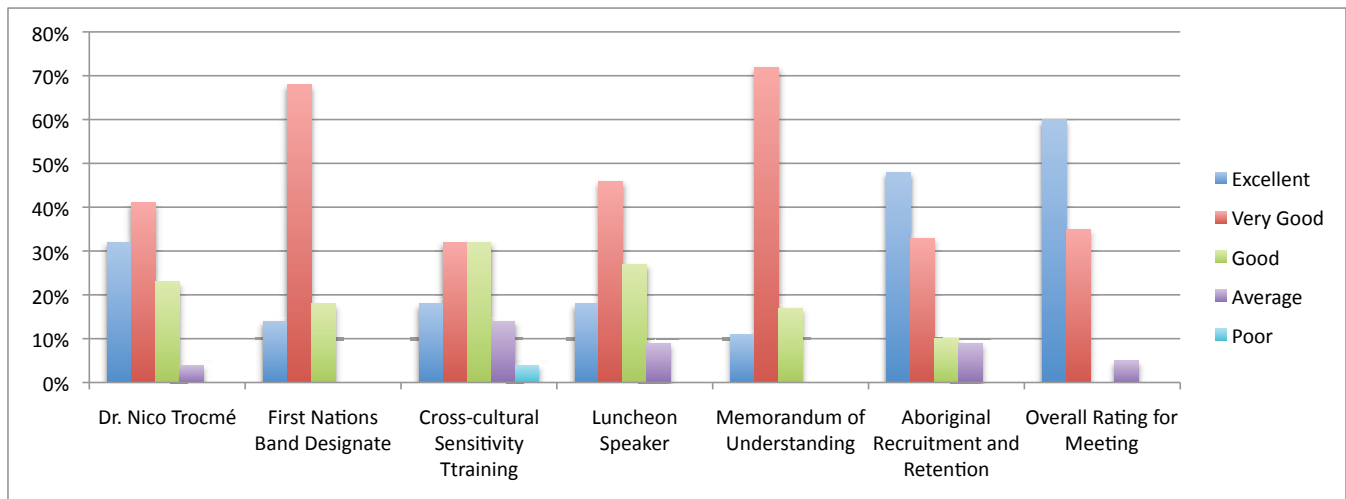
Participants of the third Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children’s Future considered the Gathering to be a success. Approximately 95 per cent of the participants who responded to the survey said the Gathering was very good to excellent.

Of particular note, is the response of participants on the topic of future meetings. Of the 22 people who responded, 17 said they agreed with holding governance meetings even if the Minister was not present. Those who did not agree with proceeding without the Minister believed that attendance, especially of the Chiefs, would not be good.

On the other hand, many of the participants who responded stressed the importance of “keeping the momentum going” and acknowledged that much has been accomplished since the Minister held the inaugural Gathering in June of 2010. Most of the comments from respondents reflected hope and optimism for “promoting understanding and trust” and fostering better working relationships between DFNAs and CFSAs.

Participants were asked to suggest topics for discussion at future meetings. Some of the topics included cross-cultural training, best practices, tracking a child through the system.

TOTAL: 22 responses	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor
Dr. Nico Trocmé	32%	41%	23%	4%	
First Nations Band Designate	14%	68%	18%		
Cross-cultural Sensitivity Ttraining	18%	32%	32%	14%	4%
Luncheon Speaker	18%	46%	27%	9%	
Memorandum of Understanding	11%	72%	17%		
Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention	48%	33%	10%	9%	
Overall Rating for Meeting	60%	35%		5%	





## Appendix 7: List of Participants

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Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister of Children and Youth Services

Steve MacDonald, Deputy Minister

### Delegated First Nation Agency Representatives

Chief James Ahnassay, Vice-Chair, North Peace Tribal Council

Chief Jim Badger, Chair, Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council

Robert Bastien, Chair, Piikani Child and Family Services

Theresa Bull, Chair, Akamkispatinaw Ohpikihawasowin Child and Family Services

Joanna Gladue, Chair, Western Cree Tribal Council Child Youth and Family Enhancement

Charlene Houle-White, Chairperson, Saddle Lake Wah-Koh-To-Win Child Care Society

Chief Rose Laboucan, Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council

Koren Lightning-Earle, President, Kasohkowew Child Wellness Society

Grand Chief Arthur Noskey, Chair, KTC Child and Family Services

Ivan Sawan, Treasurer, KTC Child and Family Services

Twylla Starlight, Vice Chairperson, Tsuu T'ina Child and Family Services

Chief Gayle Strikes With A Gun, Piikani Nation

Eldon Weasel Child, Chairperson, Siksika Family Services Corporation

Marcel Weasel Head, Chair, Blood Tribe Child Protection Services

Chief Ernest Wesley, Stoney Child and Family Services

Belva Wesley, Stoney Child and Family Services

### First Nation Representatives

Chief Allan Paul, Alexander First Nation

Loiselle Arcand, Alexander First Nation

Michelle Littlechild, Ermineskin Tribe

Gordon Minde, Ermineskin Tribe

## Appendix 7

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### Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta

Victor Horseman, Treaty 8

Ann Nipshank, Treaty 8

Darlene Plamonden, Treaty 8

### Elders

Elder Eva Cardinal, Treaty 6, Saddle Lake First Nation

Elder Albert Black Water, Treaty 7, Blood Tribe

### Presenters

Fred Anderson, Delegated First Nations Agency Support

Cathy Cloughton, Workforce Planning, Human Resources

Karen English, Piikani Child and Family Services

Joey Hamelin, Delegated First Nations Agency Support

Catherine Pennington, Talking Stick Consulting Group

Sangeeta Sicking, Organizational Support Initiatives, Human Resources

Lonnie Slezina, Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services Authority

Métis Elder Alvena Strasbourg

## Child and Family Services Authorities Representatives

Sharon Anderson, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Métis Settlements

Brian Broughton, Co-Chair, North Central Alberta

Julia Cardinal, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Northeast Alberta

Louise Charach, Co-Chair, Edmonton and Area

Patricia Cochrane, Co-Chair, Calgary and Area

Kathy Cooper, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Southeast Alberta

Barbara Cunningham, Board Member, Southwest Alberta

Tracy Czuy McKinnon, Co-Chair, Northeast Alberta

Karen Egge, Co-Chair, Northwest Alberta

Audrey Franklin, Aboriginal Co-Chair, North Central Alberta

Ron Gaida, Co-Chair, Central Alberta

Brian Hjlesvold, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Edmonton and Area

Sharon Holtman, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Southwest Alberta

Rose Lameman, Aboriginal Co-Chair, East Central Alberta

Peter Miller, Co-Chair, East Central Alberta

Judy Ostrowski, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Northeast Alberta

Sara Potts, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Central Alberta

Ronald Wickson, Co-Chair, Southeast Alberta

Kate Wood, Board Member, Calgary and Area

## Child and Youth Advocate

Del Graff

## Appendix 7

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### Children and Youth Services

Jen O'Callaghan, Executive Assistant, Minister's Office

Christopher Roth, Special Assistant, Minister's Office

Bruce Anderson, Senior Manager, Delegated First Nations Agency Support

Laurie Anderson, Assistant to the Director, Governance Services

Loretta Bellerose, Program Specialist, Delegated First Nations Agency Support

Nancy Brenneman, Administrative Support, Governance Services

Mark Hattori, Assistant Deputy Minister, Child Intervention Program Quality and Supports

Sylvia Molella, Program Analyst, Governance Services

Michael Norris, Executive Assistant, Deputy Minister's Office

Beverly Sawicki, Senior Manager, Governance Services

Lisa Shankaruk, Public Affairs Officer, Communications

Diane Thompson, Manager, Standards and Monitoring

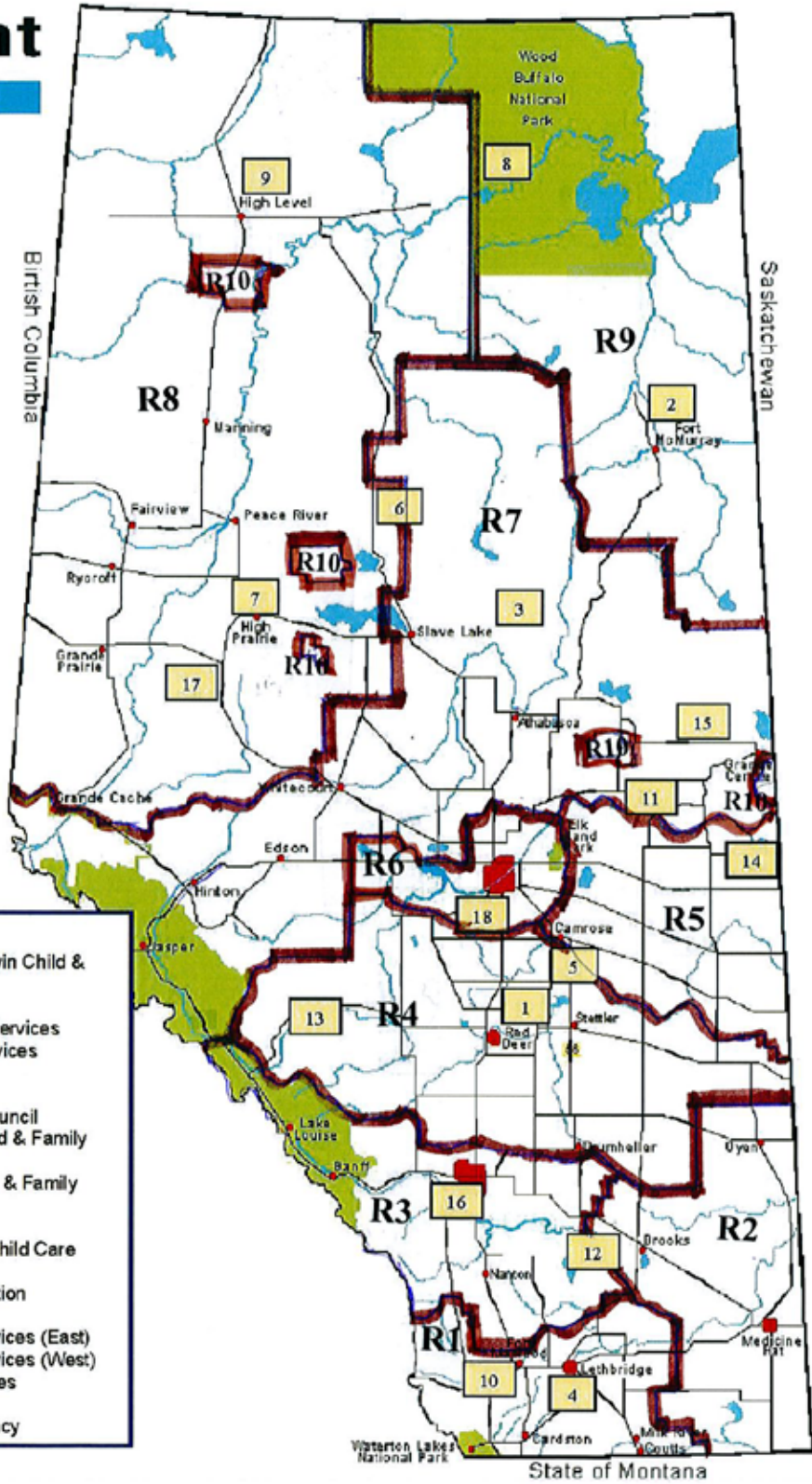
John Tuckwell, Director, Communications

# DELEGATED FIRST NATION AGENCIES AND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AUTHORITIES

**Government  
of Alberta** ■

- Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs)**
- R1 – Southwest
  - R2 – Southeast
  - R3 – Calgary and Area
  - R4 – Central
  - R5 – East Central
  - R6 – Edmonton and Area
  - R7 – North Central
  - R8 – Northwest
  - R9 – Northeast
  - R10 – Metis Settlements

- Agency Name**
1. Akamkispatinaw Ohpikihawasowin Child & Family Services
  2. Athabasca Tribal Council
  3. Bigstone Indian Child & Family Services
  4. Blood Tribe Child Protection Services
  5. Kasohkewew Child Wellness
  6. Kee Tas Kee Now
  7. Lesser Slave Indian Regional Council
  8. Little Red River Cree Nation Child & Family Services
  9. North Peace Tribal Council Child & Family Services
  10. Piikani Child & Family Services
  11. Saddle Lake Wah-Koh-To-Win Child Care Society
  12. Siksika Family Services Corporation
  13. Stoney Child & Family Services
  14. Tribal Chiefs Child & Family Services (East)
  15. Tribal Chiefs Child & Family Services (West)
  16. Tsuu T'ina Child & Family Services
  17. Western Cree Tribal Council
  18. Yellowhead Tribal Services Agency



Alberta