

Agenda
Item

Aboriginal Children in Care s.16

Issue: Aboriginal children are over represented in child welfare systems across Canada.

The report (Tab 23) provides examples of promising child welfare initiatives across Canada. It was developed by PT governments after the August 2014 meeting of Canada's Premiers, in which they discussed the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children taken into care, and agreed to share information on programs that have proven effective in improving outcomes for Aboriginal children.

Recommended BC Position

British Columbia supports public release of the report on Aboriginal children in care. It does not contain any confidential information and the content has already been shared broadly with various Aboriginal partners across Canada.

Further work is required to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in care, both within provinces and territories and in collaboration.

- British Columbia continues to work with the province's Aboriginal leaders and communities to achieve better outcomes for BC's Aboriginal children, youth and families. Meaningful engagement with Aboriginal leaders is also essential to informing any further provincial and territorial collaboration.
- The Premiers' Aboriginal Affairs Working Group should continue to advance work to address the broad social and economic issues that disproportionately affect Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and impact the likelihood of Aboriginal children becoming involved in child welfare systems.
- The Forum of Ministers Responsible for Social Services should collaborate on early intervention, prevention, outcome measurements, and continue to identify and advance culturally relevant supports for Aboriginal children and youth in care. Provincial and Territorial Ministers should also continue to actively pursue meaningful and critically important Federal engagement in this work.

Position of Other Jurisdictions

The report on Aboriginal children in care is a consensus document; therefore, all provinces and territories agree in principle on the need for:

- Meaningful Aboriginal and Federal engagement to create positive changes;
- Outcome data specific to Aboriginal children and their families; and
- Preventative services that support family cohesion as well as address root causes of neglect.

s.16

Key Points

- We all have a shared history and responsibility in Canada to address the issues of Aboriginal children in care, taking into

account the differences between PTs, between federal and PT responsibilities, and between the many cultures and specific needs of Aboriginal populations.

- BC is committed to working with our Aboriginal leaders and communities to strengthen and advance the delivery of culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal children, youth, and families.
- Meaningful engagement with Aboriginal leaders – whether locally, regionally, or nationally – is critical to informing all efforts to create positive changes for Aboriginal children and their families.
- The federal government has a responsibility to meaningfully engage with PTs and First Nation /Aboriginal leaders on these same issues.
- As British Columbia has increased the use of collaborative practice and a focus on cultural continuity in services, more positive outcomes are apparent for Aboriginal children in the province.
 - When an Aboriginal child must be removed, there are more placements with relatives and/or within the child's own community, and these placements have contributed to lower recurrence rates.
 - While such outcomes are promising, BC's progress has been compromised by a constricted federal funding formula for on-reserve child and family services, as it does not provide for adequate prevention and early intervention supports.

2015 Summer Meeting of Canada's Premiers – July 16-17, 2015

Background and Analysis

- While Aboriginal children in BC continue to be disproportionately represented in child welfare systems, the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) has introduced new initiatives in recent years to promote better outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth, such as:
 - **Aboriginal Service Innovations: Safety and Permanence:** This program is delivered by contracted Aboriginal service providers for effective, culturally relevant support services to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care and to improve permanency outcomes for those already in care.
 - **Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework:** This overarching framework resulted from MCFD's two year engagement process with Aboriginal partners, communities, elders and youth, and guides delivery of culturally appropriate services from MCFD or Delegated Aboriginal Agencies.
 - **Targeting Aboriginal Child in Care Reductions:** MCFD is implementing projects to reduce the number of children in care and increase permanency planning through adoption, transfer of custody, and completion of home studies to support children leaving care.
- Services to BC Aboriginal children, youth and families are delivered through MCFD or through 23 Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAAs). DAAs primarily deliver services on reserve and have been supported through a tripartite collaborative relationship between MCFD, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and the Delegated Agencies.

s.16