

Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children's Future

Inaugural Meeting



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
Thursday June 17, 2010

**Government
of Alberta** ■

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



Thursday 17th June, 2010, was an important and memorable day. This inaugural meeting, *Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children's Future*, was a special opportunity for Chairs 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 to meet together for the first time.

We had important conversations regarding the self-determination of services and resources for Aboriginal children and youth in Alberta. Together, we discussed how to work cooperatively and improve communication to achieve the goals we all share. These include better quality and appropriateness of services, improved supports, and brighter futures for our Aboriginal children and youth.

Throughout the day, we heard that Aboriginal children and families have challenges in the child intervention system that do not allow them to address concerns in a manner that is appropriate to their culture and communities. I was pleased to hear people say that understanding and successfully addressing these challenges require all involved to examine issues from every perspective and to work in partnership to find solutions.

This gathering was an important first step and a demonstration of our collective commitment to empowering Aboriginal families and communities when caring for their at-risk children and youth. I know the tremendous effort it took for some of you to be at the gathering. You all lead very busy lives, yet you made the commitment to attend the meeting. I thank you for that.

This is the beginning. It is the beginning of the development of good relationships. It is my hope these new relationships will serve as the foundation to enhance the well being and quality of life of Aboriginal children, youth and families for current and future generations.

Within these pages, you will read many of the thoughts, ideas, and proposed actions shared throughout the day. My commitment to you is also highlighted 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 inaugural meeting a success.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Yvonne Fritz". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister
Children and Youth Services

Program

		Gord Johnston, Acting Deputy Minister Chair and Master of Ceremonies	
8:30 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	12:00 p.m.	Lunch
9:00 a.m.	Opening Prayer Elder Jenny Cardinal, Treaty 6 Saddle Lake First Nation The River Cree Singers Enoch Cree Nation		Luncheon Blessing Elder Mary Kappo, Treaty 8 Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation Luncheon Address Honourable Dave Hancock Minister of Education
9:30 a.m.	Welcome and Opening Remarks Honourable Yvonne Fritz Minister, Children and Youth Services Keynote Address John Mould Child and Youth Advocate	1:00 p.m.	Group Discussions
		2:00 p.m.	Report of Group Discussions
		2:30 p.m.	Break
		2:45 p.m.	Round Table Discussion
10:15 a.m.	Break	3:15 p.m.	Next Steps Gord Johnston Acting Deputy Minister
10:30 a.m.	Group Discussions	3:25 p.m.	Closing Remarks Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister, Children and Youth Services
11:30 a.m.	Report of Group Discussions	3:30 p.m.	Closing Prayer Elder Rosie Day Rider, Treaty 7 Blood Tribe

Executive Summary

Thursday 17th, June 2010 marked the first time Chairs of Delegated First Nations Agencies (DFNA), Representatives of other First Nations served by Child and Family Services Authorities and Co-Chairs of Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) met as one to discuss governance issues and concerns related to Aboriginal children and youth in care.

This governance meeting was initiated by the Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister of Children and Youth Services. In meetings with representatives of DFNAs, the Minister heard the need for greater communication, and understood the importance of strong working relationships between DFNAs and CFSAs.

The keynote speaker, John Mould, Child and Youth Advocate for the Province of Alberta, emphasized the importance of relationships, noting that “Lack of relationship (lack of knowing, respect, trust) between First Nation child welfare service providers and non-First Nation child welfare service providers is a significant barrier to moving forward on behalf of First Nations children who are in care.” Mr. Mould pointed to several other factors contributing to the increase of Aboriginal children in care: Poverty and social exclusion, lack of access to the same, or equal services, supports and funding, and structural problems with the child welfare system. He also expressed concern that the focus on the over representation of Aboriginal children in care “may increase the risk for an under response to Aboriginal young people needing protective services”.

The Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education, in his luncheon address, emphasized the themes of collaboration, communication, and relationships. Minister Hancock highlighted the importance of working together, and putting the child first. He urged everyone to “understand we are working in partnership” and said, “...what really is important is the child and whatever it takes for us to work within ethical boundaries, is what we must do.”

Throughout the day, participants echoed the concerns Mr. Mould raised in his talk. Repeated a number of times by different participants were the need for the following: (a) equity in funding; (b) same access to services; (c) cultural training and sensitivity to Aboriginal issues and concerns; and greater communication, collaboration and cooperation among all those who provide services to Aboriginal children in care. As a result of discussions, participants proposed the following actions:

1. Eliminate jurisdictional struggles.
 - Develop a Memorandum of Understanding
 - Consider Jordan’s Principle
 - Involve First Nations people on Reserve in policy development and decision-making
2. Provide cultural sensitivity training to all staff working in the system.
3. Ensure all staff know the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, Policies and Procedures.
4. Develop and use culturally appropriate assessment tools.
5. Commit to greater cooperation, collaboration, communication.
 - Meet to share information and develop strategies
 - Encourage DFNA/CSFA staff to work together
 - Collect and share data
6. Ensure parents are helped and trained to be good parents.
7. Provide the infrastructure on Reserve to facilitate Aboriginal children and youth being able to remain on, or return to, their First Nation community.
8. Ensure Aboriginal children, youth and families are afforded opportunities to engage in healing (spiritual, emotional, mental and physical).

In response to participants’ suggestions and concerns voiced throughout the day, Minister Fritz committed to convening the group as soon as possible, and to begin the process to ensure the following occurs:

1. The development of a Memorandum of Understanding (tripartite process that includes the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Indian and Northern Affairs and Alberta First Nations).
2. The development and delivery of cross cultural sensitivity training.
3. A follow-up Governance meeting within six months.
4. Collection of meaningful statistics/data on children in care and program outcomes.
5. Convening of the CEOs/Executive Directors of the DFNAs, CFSAs, and Representatives of other First Nations served by CFSAs, chaired by the Deputy Minister, Children and Youth Services.

Message From The Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister, Children and Youth Services	i
Program.....	ii
Executive Summary	iii
Table of Contents.....	1
Welcome and Opening Remarks - Honourable Yvonne Fritz.....	2
Keynote Address - John Mould, Child and Youth Advocate	4
Participants’ Responses to John Mould.....	8
Group discussions - Working Together to Provide the Best Care for our Children.....	16
Introduction - Judy Ostrowski, Co-Chair Northwest Alberta Child and Family Services Authorities.....	16
Synopsis of Four Group Discussions.....	17
Luncheon Address - Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education.....	18
Round Table Discussion - Resource Challenges and Opportunities	28
Introduction - Audrey Breaker, Chair, Siksika Nation Family Services Corporation	28
Closing Remarks - Honourable Yvonne Fritz.....	42
Next Steps.....	46
Evaluation Summary	47
Appendix 1: Discussion Summaries: Working Together to Provide the Best Care for All Our Children.....	48
Bowen Room Discussion Group: Bert Auger and Mary Jane Graham, Facilitators	48
Brett Room Discussion Group: Yolanda Young Pine, Facilitator	50
Bulyea Room Discussion Group: Bruce Anderson, Facilitator.....	52
Egbert Room Discussion Group: Joey Hamelin, Facilitator	54
Appendix 2: Memorandum of Understanding for First Nations Education in Alberta.....	58
Appendix 3: North Peace Tribal Council Briefing Note for Board Chair	68
Appendix 4: Biographies	71
John Mould, Child and Youth Advocate	71
Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education	72
Appendix 5: Attendees	73
Appendix 6: Planning Committee.....	76

Good morning to everyone. Elder Cardinal and Elder Kappo, thank you for being here. Elder Rosie Day Rider is not here today and she will be missed.

I would also like to thank our Chiefs who are with us this morning: Chief Allan Paul, Chief James Ahnasay, Chief Vern Janvier, Chief Rose Laboucan, and Chief Carolyn Buffalo. Chief Clifford Pouchette isn't here as yet but I am hoping he will join us later today. But thank you to all our Chiefs who have joined us today as leaders of their communities.

DFNA Board Chairs, Representatives of First Nations served by Child and Family Services Authorities, CFSA Co-Chairs and other guests who have been invited, including staff, I am pleased to welcome all of you as this is a very special gathering.

It is appropriate that we came together so close to National Aboriginal Day on June 21st, and also the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings, which began yesterday with Chief Justice Sinclair, Head of the Commission. Many events are happening that bring a lot of power to what we are doing here today.

Also, where we are meeting is significant. This is such an amazing building. When you look around, you will see a lot of beautiful paintings, many done by Aboriginal artists. Many important meetings have taken place in this building – Premiers' conferences, Royal receptions, and dinners with dignitaries. We have had Aboriginal people meet here to discuss protocol and education issues. This is where Caucus meets. When we are in session, we meet here every Thursday morning.

We are here for an important reason. This is an inaugural meeting. And today's gathering, as I said earlier, is important.



Elder Jenny Cardinal, Hon. Yvonne Fritz

The Planning Committee chose the title for the meeting, "Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children's Future". I thought this was wonderful because that is what today is about. It is about a gathering and a sharing of information. It is a gathering to build stronger relationships as we exchange ideas. But for me, it is a gathering to discuss ideas, and one that I hope will bring possible solutions and suggestions on how we move forward.

... it only makes sense when we look after the same child, when that child in care moves from one jurisdiction to another, that there are strong and balanced relationships among the leaders in our community that look after our children and our families.

The Aboriginal community has been a focus for my Ministry since it was established 11 years ago. Over the past decade, Children and Youth Services has changed greatly, in large part because of what we learned from the Aboriginal community. Many of you have seen those changes. You have been a part of that. I have been an MLA for many years but not as a Minister of this portfolio. I think I was blessed when I received this portfolio, especially when I saw the strong leaders like you out in the community.

I am very interested in child intervention, but I am also interested in hearing how we can assist people on and off Reserve, what we can do for our Aboriginal children, and how we can have healthy families. We can only make that happen if we, all of us, improve the way we address issues and the way we share information and resources. And that's exactly what we will be discussing today.

It only makes sense that when two organizations are looking after the same child (and I have said this many times before), it only makes sense when we look after the same child, when that child in care moves from one jurisdiction to another, that there are strong and balanced relationships among the leaders in our community that look after our children and our families. What you hear me saying today is that each and every one of us knows what the issues are. I know you are thinking even now what those issues are and how we can make things far more positive.

When I was visiting with Tammy Whitney on Tsuu T'ina about a month or six weeks ago, we discussed the number of children in care that are Aboriginal. We know that about 60 to 65 % of all children in care are Aboriginal and the number is increasing. We know this is unacceptable and that is why we are here today.

We have a great turnout for this first meeting. You have taken the time to be here because you know it is unacceptable for so many children to be in care. We all know it is important that Aboriginal families have our support and that support be reflected in the work we all do. It is critical that Aboriginal families are helped so more children are able to stay with, or return safely to, their families and communities.

I am wishing you all a very good day. I will listen to what you have to say. I want to hear your views, your wisdom. I have appreciated the meetings I have had with you over the last several months. I look forward to hearing more today.

Thank you. Thank you for being here.

Honourable Minister Yvonne Fritz, Elders Mary Kappo and Jenny Cardinal; Delegated First Nation Agencies Representatives; First Nation Representatives; Child and Family Services Authorities Representatives; Deputy Minister Gord Johnston; ladies and gentlemen:

I appreciate the opportunity to be with you this morning to provide the observations of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate concerning the important topic being considered at today's Gathering.

I am going to talk for a while and then I would be happy to answer questions in the remaining time prior to the break.

In his 1993 Report, *In Need of Protection: Children and Youth in Alberta*, Bernd Walter, the Province's first Child and Youth Advocate, wrote: "...there is a critical need to ...examine the disturbing reality that despite numerous initiatives the percentage of (Aboriginal) children on child welfare caseloads has almost doubled from a rate of 22% in January, 1986."

Seven years before Bernd issued his report, the Alberta child welfare legislation had been amended to provide for specific recognition of First Nation rights and interests when decisions are being made about First Nation children. At the time, there were expectations that legislative change was the necessary first step toward addressing the over representation of First Nation children in care. In spite of those changes, Bernd sounded the alarm about the increasing numbers of young people of Aboriginal (First Nation, Métis and Inuit) descent on child welfare caseloads. Seventeen years later, the "disturbing reality" is that Aboriginal children and youth now constitute 50 – 60 % of intervention caseloads.

Clearly, the hoped for outcomes of the legislative amendments and of all the initiatives undertaken since that time have not been successful in reversing the trend of increasing numbers of Aboriginal



John Mould

... there is inconsistent compliance with putting the practice principles into action; there is little agreement on the processes associated with getting to the desired outcomes: and, there is little evidence of joint working together toward the desired ends. There are persistent power and control struggles - about who is leading and who is following - and the only result of these struggles is that children lose.

children falling into care. Seeking to understand why this is the case and what needs to be done differently is an urgent necessity.

Based on the experience of our Office, and based on the opportunities I've had to discuss the problem with colleagues inside and outside the Province, I have identified what I believe are some causal factors. They are:

(1) Lack of relationship (lack of knowing, respect, trust) between First Nation child welfare service providers and non-First Nation child welfare service providers is a significant barrier to moving forward on behalf of First Nations children who are in care.

Our experience suggests there is general agreement by all with the principles that guide child welfare practice with First Nations children and with the desired outcomes for these children. However, because of the lack of relationship, there is inconsistent compliance with putting the practice principles into action; there is little agreement on the processes associated with getting to the desired outcomes; and, there is little evidence of joint working together toward the desired ends. There are persistent power and control struggles - about who is leading and who is following - and the only result of these struggles is that children lose.

In instances where effective working relationships do exist, good outcomes are achieved. However, these relationships are individually based, not institutional. When staff turnover occurs or when something shifts or changes in the work environment, those relationships falter and often disappear.

(2) First Nations children and families do not have the same, or equal, access to services and supports and funding as other children and families who have child welfare involvement. Partly this is because the services and supports are often located far away from First Nation communities. Partly this is because of the way Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) funds services to eligible children and families.

(3) A complete statistical picture of the well-being of First Nations children in Alberta is not available, as limited administrative data is collected or analyzed as to their health, safety and well-being. The capacity to gather and analyze data exists (Alberta is one

First Nations children and families do not have the same, or equal, access to services and supports and funding as other children and families who have child welfare involvement.

of very few jurisdictions to have a Child and Youth Data Laboratory) but the commitment to undertaking this work is lacking.

I want to emphasize the importance of collecting data and identifying leading indicators arising from key domains of well-being (health, education, safety, justice involvement and family status). Without such data, we cannot measure whether we are making progress in improving the outcomes for First Nations children, or which initiatives are having an impact.

Such data also helps give profile to those communities that are thriving, and where children and youth enjoy good outcomes. These examples can help point the way to a better path for First Nations children by using evidence to inform sound policy and rigorous performance improvement.

(4) With the limited data collection and analysis that is done, we know the following:

Aboriginal children are disproportionately living in poverty. That is true in Alberta as it is across Canada. The Assembly of First Nations describes the poverty experienced by Aboriginal peoples as "the single greatest social injustice facing Canada". While Canada's child poverty rate is higher than many similarly developed countries, Aboriginal children disproportionately experience its impacts. Bennett and Blackstock (2007) view poverty as a "contemporary legacy of colonization that



River Cree Singers, Enoch Cree Nation

undermines the ability of Aboriginal families to nurture and support their children”. The pervasiveness of poverty and its systemic impact has aptly been described as an “insidious poverty epidemic”.

The connection between poverty and child welfare involvement is well known in the literature and in experience. When deep intergenerational poverty persists, the default solution may become the child welfare system, with removals of children, inadequate opportunities to work to support family restoration or strength, and an acceptance of a rate of neglect or maltreatment of children that is unacceptable. Aboriginal children and youth in Canada have inadequate opportunities to exit the cycle of poverty.

Aboriginal children face significant health problems in comparison with other children. In the domain of health, Aboriginal children and youth again lag behind their peers as measured by key determinants.

In Canada, a third of Aboriginal children live in low-income families where food security is a concern. Aboriginal children disproportionately live in substandard housing that is characterized by “crowding, need for repairs and poor water

quality.” Infant mortality, obesity, diabetes, respiratory illnesses all show Aboriginal children at a much higher risk compared to non-Aboriginal children. These figures are compounded by geographical accessibility issues, cultural insensitivities and language barriers.

Access to primary health care, and prevention and support for children and youth with special needs such as developmental disabilities, are inconsistent, and not responsive to the need. Key health indicators, such as birth weights, infant mortality, and teen pregnancy all suggest a gap with non-Aboriginal peers for these children and youth.

Many Aboriginal children and youth face the challenges and limitations of living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Health Canada estimates that nine in every 1000 infants are born with FASD, and initial research suggests that occurrence of FASD is significantly higher among Aboriginal populations.

Aboriginal families and children are subject to social exclusion. The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) defines social exclusion as “...a lack of belonging, acceptance and recognition. People who are socially excluded are more

economically and socially vulnerable, and hence they tend to have diminished life experiences.

Poverty is one of the key factors in exclusion. The CCSD report, *The Progress of Canada’s Children 2002*, found that children living in poor families are less likely to have positive experiences at school, and they are less likely to participate in recreation. As well, children who live in persistent poverty are twice as likely to live in a [family that struggles to meet the needs of its members], they are twice as likely to live with violence, and more than three times as likely to live with a depressed parent – all risk factors for social exclusion.”

- (5) The over representation of Aboriginal children and youth on child welfare caseloads stems largely from structural issues - from poverty, from health and wellness issues, and from social exclusion – rather than from the way child welfare systems operate. Not dealing with the structural problems has left, and continues to leave, child welfare as the default service system.

To say the same thing from another perspective – child welfare is a reactive response to something that has gone wrong in a family’s ability to care for its child. When the things that have gone wrong arise from factors that are systemic in nature; when these factors affect the ability of a large number of people to manage the tasks and responsibilities of parenthood; and when nothing happens to deal with these factors, the number of children “falling into care” will continue to increase. And there is nothing the child welfare system itself can do to stem the flow.

It is necessary to find ways to decrease the power and control struggles and to reach consensus on how we achieve the desired outcomes for young people.

- (6) There is increasing discussion about the over representation of Aboriginal children and youth on child welfare caseloads. In some instances this is being characterized as another assimilationist attempt on the part of the dominant society, or as another iteration of the residential school phenomenon. There is such focus on the over representation that child welfare services feel considerable pressure to decrease the number of Aboriginal children receiving services. A concern of our Office is that this increases the risk for an under response to Aboriginal young people needing protective services – that children will be left in unsafe circumstances simply to avoid bringing more Aboriginal children into care.

In closing, I want to be clear that there are actions we can take that will improve the service response to First Nations children and families. Building relationships between First Nation and non-First Nation child welfare service deliverers, and institutionalizing team work, is one of those actions. As well, it is necessary to find ways to decrease the power and control struggles and to reach consensus on how we achieve the desired outcomes for young people. Ultimately, however, the only real way to decrease the number of First Nation, Métis and Inuit children who fall into care is to deal with the poverty and social exclusion that is far too great an influence on the lives of Aboriginal children and families in Canada and in Alberta.

Thank you.

Chief Allan Paul

It's a first and good step. Address the poverty and the children in care. We have to start looking at legislative gaps, funding gaps. There is something seriously wrong. Since 1993, since I have been involved, since signing one of the first agreements, the rates are going higher and higher and the agenda doesn't address that. It just addresses a beginning process.

After you retire I hope you can come and be a witness to some of the things that are happening in child welfare, to some of the things that are happening in non-delegated First Nation areas: The lack of the Elders' role in our communities, lack of respect of our culture and community and the undermining by our government when it comes to our children in care; lack of respect from the Federal Government to come to the table.

I share the Minister's comments that the Federal Government has to be brought to the table when we are dealing with Federal responsibility. I am trying to track down the court case on the off loading of responsibility on the Province. It has to stop. We have to look at those things. We have not come close to how we can develop our own child welfare advocate. At least, Mr. Mould, your comments are very sensitive, leading us, hopefully, to some open debate.

But I want to mention to the group here that the Alberta Chiefs have tabled a resolution to begin a process dealing with child welfare. We are not talking about delegated or non-delegated. We are looking at child welfare issues and some of the areas of children in care, of all the incidences. We can't take our kids from one situation and then put them into an abusive situation that leads to serious incidences. We have to find ways of tracking those incidences. Sometimes, they go unreported. We have to seriously take that into account if we are really protecting kids that are off Reserve.



Chief Allan Paul responds to John Mould

The other area we also have to address is the needs of non-delegated First Nations. I know we have been operating our program without funding. We have a partnership that works with the Province that we feel has kept our apprehensions down. We are not going to take delegation even if it is forced on us. We will fight it all the way if we have to. We have to look at that as an area of concern because delegation sometimes doesn't work. It increases the problems.

I welcome the challenge, Minister, at some point to address the process the Chiefs have tabled, will be tabling, with you and we made that announcement with the Premier on Monday. We have to look at child welfare in its entirety. We have to get the Federal people involved.

You did not address - I know you wanted to talk about it and you came close to it - one of the things you did not address is we have to find ways for the Province to incorporate into legislation Jordan's Principle; even to deal with the Human Rights Declaration and getting your Ministry and the Advocate to address the uniqueness of that Declaration and how much it means not only to the children but also the First Nations people of Alberta. I know you want to touch on those things.

John Mould's Response to Chief Allan Paul

I appreciate the comments very much. I recognize the omission of Jordan's Principle is a significant omission. I believe that is an important principle.

In a few days time, I will be with my colleagues and we will be issuing a statement as Canadian Advocates with respect to the state of Aboriginal children and youth in this country and one of the component parts of that statement will speak to the importance of Jordan's Principle and the importance of it being adopted.

I look around the room and there are familiar faces and people I have had the opportunity to be with over the years when we have been having similar discussions. It is not that those discussions have been for nothing. I was saying to Bruce earlier, at its core, child welfare is a relationship-based activity. The most important thing we can do is talk with each other. Recognize we have differences. Those differences are important. We need to understand and work with those differences because ultimately it's our kids who benefit from that discussion and that relationship. And so, I see this again as another really important opportunity to have those relationship building activities restarted and re-energized; and there clearly are things we can do that will make a positive difference. But I couldn't live with myself if I left here without saying there are larger forces, and it is important that we figure out how we can join together to deal with those larger forces, with the systemic poverty, the health issues, the education issues. Without that work, we will all come back here and talk some more about the number of young people who have fallen into care.

John Mould Explains the Position of the Child and Youth Advocate

I belong to an organization called the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates and I am currently the Chair of that Council. It brings together the nine, now ten actually, Canadian Advocates. The

only Province that doesn't have an advocate is Prince Edward Island; and Yukon just recently appointed an Advocate, a man by the name of Andy Nieman who we will meet for the first time when we are in Ottawa next week. That council is really a peer group. We have no jurisdiction nationally. We all come representing our particular mandates and our particular Provinces. One area of concern that we share across the country is in relationship to the numbers of First Nation children and youth that are on caseloads. And it is from that perspective we will issue our statement. It simply gives light to the concern that we have for the children and for the lack of progress on the systemic issues that are, in our minds, underpinning what is going on.



Ken Serr, Chief Rose Laboucan

Chief Rose Laboucan

One of the things that has never been addressed is that in our community, the percentage of our parents' parents were in residential schools. Year after year, our parents and communities were childless. The parenting process was also stolen, not just the children. The root of that problem has never been addressed and Elders like Jenny Cardinal and Mary Kappo are far and few between now in our communities where they have that knowledge and that tradition. We are even going to be lacking in those Elders in our communities. Here is Jenny Cardinal taking care of a four-year old and she is eighty. That's rare in a lot of our communities now. Addressing the multi-generational

genocide of parenting because of residential schools will help us empower our families again.

Our Aboriginal children's future and taking care of our own will depend on how this Province works *with us* and not *for us*. *For us* is part of the problem. I'm just going to put it on the table. Someone else is again thinking for us, doing things for us, without us addressing or realizing what our real concerns are. We need to be partners. That is how we can work together. There has never been equality in the working together part and that is very key.

As leaders in our communities, we are trying to address these social issues in a very small environment. I don't know what percentages of those children in care come from broken families, marital breakups, or children having children. We have a lot of that - unwed mothers. When we look at the percentages, we can then distinguish how we are going to work with these children and those families. We need to look at those things. We are trying to work with families in the community, in a community that is not even a community. That has also been broken, the concept of community, and that needs to be addressed.

The lateral violence, not just the violence, but also the lateral violence among our own people, we need to address that. That's a growing concern for me in my community.

I would like to address also the issue of the poverty that comes from other issues.

Our Aboriginal children's future and taking care of our own will depend on how this Province works with us and not for us. We need to be partners.

Year after year, our parents and communities were childless. The parenting process was also stolen, not just the children.

When I look at all the things going on, I know for me, as a leader of Driftpile First Nation (I'm here representing Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council today), but from Driftpile First Nation, I don't want my children taken away anymore. I want to be able to work with the Province and the Federal Government so when my children have issues within a family, I am able to take care of them while we work these problems out; so the children no longer go into care somewhere else where we will never see them again. That is what I am working on right now for Driftpile First Nation. If industry could cough up dollars to help me out, I don't see why the Province and the Federal Government can't help to address some of those issues.

But we as communities, Indian Reserves across the Province, we need to step up to the plate too. This is two fold. This is not just a problem with the Province taking care of our children. Part of the problem is us taking care of our own children. If we are serious about it, we need to address that. We need to look at it from both sides. Those are just some of the major concerns I have right now.

It's wonderful we have an Advocate. But the other issue I would like someone to address when they replace you, there's something that should be looked at - the judicial system. It's a scary place for young moms especially in the area of marital breakups. If you don't know anything about the court system as a young mother or dad, you will lose your children. That's a real problem.

Chief Carolyn Buffalo

As a Chief, child welfare is around me all the time. I can't go anywhere or do anything without running into it. I deal with parents and grandparents and people in the system so I'm glad we are having discussions today.

Yesterday, I got a call from the Edmonton Journal and they were asking me about educational issues. One of the things I said to the reporter was something that's never happened - why we have such difficulty with the educational system, with the residential schools. There has never been reconciliation between our educational institutions and our people, and until that happens our people will view educational institutions as a dangerous place to be. They are not safe places for our people; and that's why our people don't want to go.

The same is true for the child welfare system. We need to have reconciliation between our child welfare institutions and our people; and until that happens we will have this problem. So I am glad, and I agree that we need to have relationship building and discussions.

I have two questions for the Child Advocate. One is, there are children like my son who cannot speak. They literally can't talk. But they are children. They literally do not have a voice. How do you represent children like that? They can't speak. I'm an advocate for my son but most of our parents don't have those advocacy skills but those children still need advocacy; so how do you do that?

My second question is, in your work with your colleagues across the country, how many of them report to their ministries and how many to the Legislative Assembly because that makes a huge difference? I think that's part of the problem we have here in Alberta is that you do not report to the Legislative Assembly. You report to the Ministry. So I'm wondering, how can our children's voices be heard if we are limited in that way? And that's an issue I would like to see addressed.

There has never been reconciliation between our educational institutions and our people, and until that happens our people will view educational institutions as a dangerous place to be. They are not safe places for our people; and that's why our people don't want to go.

John Mould's Response to Chief Carolyn Buffalo

The first issue - we work in two different ways in our office. I am not going to talk about older or young people but those young people who are unable to instruct us because of age or some ability issue. What we do is we typically get a referral. It will always be from a third party because that young person can't call us and that referral is always around a problem. It doesn't matter who it is who defines the problem. That's how we first learn about the young people.

Then, what we do is take some time and go and gather information. We will read the child welfare file, and will go and talk with people who know that young person, people who are involved in that decision; maybe people who are not involved but will help us understand the context for that child. Eventually, what we are looking for is the extent to which the information we have makes sense in relationship to the decision that's being proposed. Is there a good connection between that information and the path that the decision-maker is on? If they don't fit together well, then we will ask for a pause. Let's go back to the table and talk, because we need to understand better how it is you got to that decision in the face of that information.

I will tell you, mostly when that happens, it is that we have a decision that is driven by some force other than the information about that child. Sometimes, it's just simply the pressure applied by the birth family, or sometimes it is pressure applied by the bureaucracy itself, or some other pressure that takes the decision down a particular road that really has nothing to do with what we know, what is known, about that young person. So we put ourselves in a position of negotiating the change to the decision, at least so that it is consistent and makes sense with the information that is known about the young person.

I will also say to you that it is the least preferred type of work in my office because really, we're making judgments as well on that information. What makes us right? We shy away from saying we know right action. Instead, what we say is there are processes to follow in relationship to coming to the best decision, which belongs to the director. We're interested in making sure those processes are honoured and followed.

Lots of time what we find when a decision has taken off in an odd direction is that those processes are broken. So when we work with young or older people,

One is the particular mandate of the Advocate in this Province says we should represent the rights, interest and viewpoints of young people who are receiving services from the Ministry. It doesn't give me the mandate to deal with young people who are receiving services from any other ministry. By virtue of the reporting relationship, I have direct contact with the Minister, and that is significant.

they are the ones who get to tell us about their lives, what's not working, what they would like to have so it would work better. Advocates generally like that a lot more. What we call uninstructed advocacy is much more difficult. But that's how we go about it.

Let's now talk about the reporting. I am personally supportive of the model we have. I am supportive for three reasons. One is the particular mandate of the Advocate in this Province says we should represent the rights, interest and viewpoints of young people who are receiving services from the Ministry. It doesn't give me the mandate to deal with young people who are receiving services from any other ministry. By virtue of the reporting relationship, I have direct contact with the Minister, and that is significant. I also have direct access to information and to decision-makers. So in terms of the mandate that we have, it works very well that I have this direct reporting relationship to the Minister. I don't report to anybody in the Ministry.

My job is really a lot about something that I talked about earlier, and that's relationship building. I work really hard at building relationships with the bureaucracy because ultimately I need to know that when I have something to say to the bureaucracy that they can hear me. So Gord said earlier and I appreciate it, he hopes that we have a friendship. We have a sufficient relationship that if I have some things that I have to say to him, I can go and tell him. So from a problem solving process and for being able to talk particularly about the systemic issues, that direct relationship with the Minister works very well in my mind.

Second, I am the only Advocate in the country that has responsibility for children that are served under one ministry. In every other province there are children who are served by more than one; and sometimes children who are receiving services from government, which essentially covers all children in the province. If my mandate was outside of Children and Youth Services and I also dealt with another ministry, then it would not work to report to one ministry and at that

point it would be necessary to look at being a separate office of the legislature.

I think that the type of model that we have - I think that from the outside looking in - it is hard to understand or it's hard to trust that I am not controlled; that people aren't saying, "John, you go out there and this is the message that I want you to deliver." Again, I think it's part of my responsibility in terms of relationship building, for people to get to know me and understand that that's simply not something I will do. I will not do it. I have a particular responsibility that I am given in law, and I absolutely respect that responsibility. And that responsibility says I need to pass on whatever it is that my colleagues or I learn as we deliver advocacy support to young people. I have said many times to media, to other people, there is a part of this that I have to ask you to just trust the fact that I am not being controlled.

The third thing - in every other province save ours, the mandate of the Advocate is to do systemic investigations. So one will often hear about reports that are released in other provinces based on a systemic investigation that's been done. That's not part of my mandate. If I was doing systemic investigations then I will say, "Now, maybe there is some point to not reporting directly to the Minister because not only is it awkward for me but also awkward for the Minister and now there needs to be a distance." But I don't have that mandate nor am I seeking it. It is not something I think is a particular gap. That investigations are done - absolutely; that I have an opportunity to participate in those - absolutely. But they are not my investigations.

That's not my role. My role is to be supportive of young people who are in a situation that is difficult for any child, where children feel the need to have support to be heard and be participants in the decisions that affect them. And my role is to take those stories forward about those things the way the system is organized that don't work for them.



Bruce Anderson, Chief James Ahnassay

Chief James Ahnassay

Thank you, Minister Fritz, for allowing this forum to happen. It's a long time coming. I believe it is timely. As we heard yesterday the first Truth and Reconciliation session began.

When it comes to building relationships it is important to have a point person at the First Nation's level. I just want to point out the importance of the advocacy person. Where in your case you have a fully funded Advocate position to try to get the child's voice heard, at the First Nation's level there is a need for advocacy, what we term as First Nations Designate.

The reason why we came up with this is that prior to the Service Authorities, any services, any action that was required to be reported to Council, we had to have someone from Children Services to be on the agenda and it was a cumbersome process.

Since then, we have been covering our own costs in terms of having what used to be called a Band Designate, what is now a First Nations Designate. This has been addressed in the legislative changes in 2004 but there's still a flaw because when you look at DFNAs that have direct authority from the Nation, for example, Little Red River Cree Nation and some other

Participants' Responses To John Mould

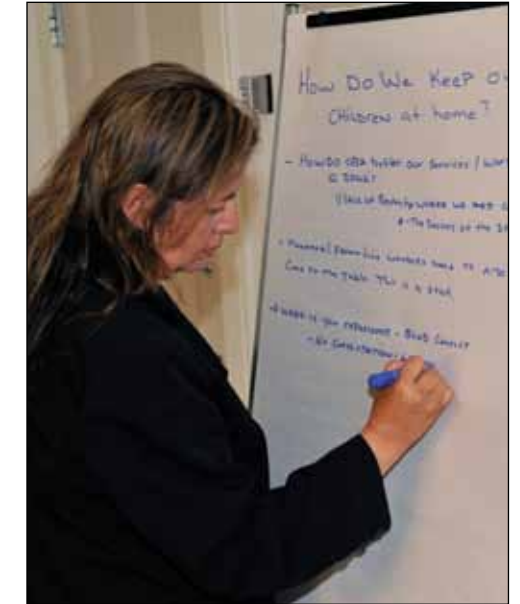
First Nations that took on their own because they have a thousand children or more. In that case, the legislation says the Director is the Designate. It works okay because it's their own agency. When it comes to a Tribal Council Agency having a DFNA Designate, it is no longer the same case. We are still a First Nation who are member Nations of that Tribal Council, an association or affiliation, so we cannot have the Director of the Tribal Council being the Designate to consult on our behalf. That is the reason why we have as a First Nation to fight for our Designate because not only children but also the families and the relationship is the key essence of having a Designate.

On a quarterly basis or on a year round basis, a consultation process takes place to review each file that is active and that is really helpful for our case and it doesn't tie up the governance in terms of having to deal with matters that need to go to the Council. With having a Designate, we do get cases like a need for adoption, need for long term care. Those are dealt with by the Designate and the agencies and then when documentation is ready, our Council deals with the matter; and it is a better process - no bottlenecking.

We need to address the need for each First Nation to have a Designate position and have funding provided. In the case of a DFNA, under the Tribal Council, it may be good to have one Designate but separate, in the same way as you (Child and Youth Advocate) are separate from the agencies in Alberta. If you are part of the staff of the DFNA, then your hands get tied. We experienced that through the North Peace Tribal Council DFNA. We tried with the Designate having to work through the agency for a while but conflicts arise. One can't speak against their own agency, so to speak, in advocacy for the family and children. Those are of key importance in relationships with the DFNAs and CFSAs and also the Alberta Government. Those are really important parts that need to be considered as part of any changes or improvements that are going to be made from here on.

(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.)

Participants engage in discussions — Working Together to Provide the Best Care for Our Children



Introduction - Judy Ostrowski, Co-Chair Northwest Alberta Child and Family Services Authorities

Good morning! This room is absolutely powerful. The passion that is here right now is absolutely powerful.

First and foremost I want to give thanks. So, if you would indulge me - I would like to begin by acknowledging the Creator, our grandmothers and our grandfathers, for the many gifts and the blessings that we have. I would also like to acknowledge the Elders who are here with us today. I am honoured for them to be here.

It is truly an honour for me to be here with all of you today and to have been a member of the Planning Committee. It has been an absolutely wonderful experience especially because this is truly a historic event.

I would like to thank the Minister for bringing us together, and for your leadership, your direction to make sure this gathering became a reality, in a very short period of time I should add.

As the Deputy Minister mentioned, I have been tasked with the introduction of the first topic for discussion. The Planning Committee had suggested a number of different topics. However, we thought it would be very important for us to devote some time to sharing ideas with each other on how we can ensure the best possible outcome and care for our Aboriginal children and youth. In what ways can we serve our young ones so they are nurtured, loved and feel a sense of pride and belonging in this world?



Sandra Cardinal, Judy Ostrowski

As leaders gathered here today, whether you are DFNA Chairs, CFSA Co-Chairs, or Representatives of First Nations that are provided services by the CFSAs, we now have an unprecedented opportunity to speak with each other, to listen and hear, and to work out strategies to make sure that together we will serve our Aboriginal children and youth in ways that nurture their minds, bodies and souls.

Our first group discussion is about making sure that whatever we do is done in a way so our children and youth are the ultimate beneficiaries. I really would like to ask you to keep in mind a couple of thoughts - how we work together and also the best possible outcomes.

It is our hope that we will all share openly, that we will speak with a true heart, and that we will share our thoughts and ideas of how we, all of us, collectively, can and should work together to ensure the very best for our Aboriginal children and youth.

¹ Judy Ostrowski's introduction is a transcript of her spoken introduction. The Synopsis is based on the Summary of the Four Group Discussions provided by the Facilitators.

Synopsis of Four Group Discussions

Several common themes emerged as a result of the four group discussions, indicating that no matter what Region, no matter what Treaty Area, no matter what Band, there are systemic challenges which need to be addressed and overcome so that Aboriginal children, youth and communities are able to thrive in today's society.

The notes provided by the facilitators indicate there are strong perceptions and feelings that the system must be improved. Jurisdictional issues, funding, home assessments, cultural sensitivity training (and training in general), partnerships and more effective communication and information sharing among those serving children, youth and families – these have all been identified as issues that must be addressed to ensure that Aboriginal children, youth and families are able to live healthy lives and contribute to their communities.

The key points arising from the groups' discussions are summarized under the following different headings:

1. Eliminate jurisdictional struggles
 - MOU: Federal, Provincial, First Nations
 - Jordan's Principle
 - Involve First Nations people on Reserve in policy development, decision-making, etc.
2. Provide cultural sensitivity training for all staff working in the system and foster parents
3. Ensure all staff know the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, Policies and Procedures
4. Develop and use culturally appropriate assessment tools
5. Commit to greater cooperation, collaboration, communication

- Meet to share information and develop strategies
 - Encourage staff to work together
 - Collect and share data
6. Ensure parents are helped and trained to be good parents
 7. Provide the infrastructure on Reserve to facilitate Aboriginal children and youth being able to remain on, or return to, their First Nation community
 8. Ensure Aboriginal children, youth and families are afforded opportunities to engage in healing (spiritual, emotional, mental and physical)

More details of the points raised in each discussion group, as recorded by the group facilitator, are provided in this report in Appendix 1: Discussion Summaries: Working Together to Provide the Best Care For Our Children.



Karen Egge, Chief Rose Laboucan

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much, Yvonne, for those kind words and for being such a good friend and mentor over the years.

It is true that I have had the opportunity of working with many of you here today. I was very privileged when I first got into government to be able to be in Cabinet and have the portfolio of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. I moved relatively quickly to change the name of the department to reflect the importance of what was then known as the Native Secretariat to Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs because that was such an important part of what we were working on - to ensure that all people in Alberta were included in government decision-making, and included in an appropriate way to have what our then Premier insisted on in terms of a government-to-government relationship was understood throughout government.

One of the first pieces of legislation we worked on was a goal that Aboriginal people should have the same social/economic status as other people of Alberta. This was an important day for me. The goal has changed but the concept has not been lost. It has been important work.

I do appreciate the opportunity of being here today if for no other reason than to catch up with old friends and memories.

Educational achievement results for children and youth in care lag behind those for the general student population. When I look at the high school completion rates, and the drop-out rates for FNMI children and youth in care, this gap is further amplified.



Hon. Dave Hancock

What you are doing here today... and I am so privileged to have even a short time with you and to speak on behalf of Premier Stelmach and my colleagues in the Government of Alberta... what you are doing here today is timely and of extreme importance.

Everyone attending is here because, either directly or indirectly, you are making a positive difference in the lives of children, and particularly the lives of Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.

As Minister of Education, I have worn this pin which says, "Children First", and I do so advisedly because it was given to me by someone I very highly respect in the education system. It is a reminder every day about what this is all about and what we are in this for. It's a reminder that all of us have gifts given to us by our Creator; and our obligation to our society and to our Nations and to our community is to maximize those gifts, maximize that potential, so we can take care of ourselves and our families, so we can contribute back to our communities in a positive way to continue to build our communities.

As Minister of Education, I truly believe every one of our young people, every student, has potential that can be fully realized, and that absolutely includes First

Nation, Métis and Inuit students and children in our Province.

Our education system is now in a position for transformational change – a change for the better – one that is inclusive of all children. I had the privilege last week with Yvonne and Gene Zwozdesky to announce the next steps in "Setting the Direction Framework". It started about setting the direction for special needs students in our schools. But what it's really about is saying there are no special needs students in our schools. What we have are students, and all our students have needs, some of those needs are greater than others. But all of those students have potential and what we need to do is provide an education system which values their potential and helps them succeed.

So if we are working to help those children be successful, we need to understand we don't own the file. We don't own that child. But we have a common obligation towards that child and therefore we have an obligation of working together, sharing information, developing an understanding and being supportive of that child, quite frankly, through that child, through that child's family, because often that's the best way we can make change.

First Nation/Métis/Inuit [FNMI] education has been a priority for the Government of Alberta for several years, and continues to be at the forefront of Alberta Education's 2010-2013 Business Plan. Indeed, our focus on success for FNMI students is part of government's overarching goal to improve the quality of life for all citizens of this Province.

Our First Nations and Métis population is one of the youngest and fastest growing populations in Alberta. What the challenge is for all of us, I believe, is the educational achievement gap between our FNMI students when compared to students overall.

Educational achievement results for children and youth in care lag behind those for the general student population. When I look at the high school completion rates, and the drop-out rates for FNMI children and youth in care, this gap is further amplified.

Clearly, we need to be doing a lot more. Working together has not effectively provided the supports that these children and youth require to succeed and flourish as individuals.

This situation is unacceptable.

We can do better by moving forward to find lasting solutions and drive change in our approaches to addressing the needs of FNMI students, including those who are in care.

Dr. Wayne Dyer, renowned author, said, "When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at can change." And government has made changes by looking at things through a different lens.

The Ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services have recently developed the "Success in School for Children and Youth in Care Initiative". This initiative provides a framework to promote strategies and further working relationships between partners that support success in school for children and youth in care.



Elder Jenny Cardinal, Hon. Dave Hancock, Audrey Breaker

Now many, including myself, would say, “What took us so long? That’s a no brainer.” It’s really about people who are working with children understanding they are working with children, not working with files. They are not owning a file. It’s a child. And whether a child is in school, or a child is at home, or a child is in the community, it’s the same child; and that child has needs for support and has the same need for opportunities to be successful. So if we are working to help those children be successful, we need to understand we don’t own the file. We don’t own that child. But we have a common obligation towards that child and therefore we have an obligation of working together, sharing information, developing an understanding and being supportive of that child, quite frankly, through that child, through that child’s family, because often that’s the best way we can make change. Children are the best change agents. If a child learns something

We need to sit together; we need to talk together; we need to work together.

different, if a child has support, if a child has success, often that’s a way to actually make a difference in that family.

Many of the problems children bring to school are not the children’s problems but the families’ problems. And so, when we have our teachers in our schools and we can provide the best teachers - we have excellent teachers in the Province - we need to develop more role models and mentors in that area. We have excellent teachers. We can provide the best teachers. We can provide the best schools, but unless we can support those children with the issues and the concerns they bring from the community and from the family, we won’t be successful.

A Provincial Protocol Framework will guide the development of local regional agreements between school authorities and Child and Family Services Authorities and other partners, such as Delegated First Nation Agencies, Alberta Health Services, and Solicitor General and Public Services.

So we’ve got together and we’ve got agreements together that we are going to share the information and work together. That’s wonderful! Now, we actually have to do it. We have to work together. And I think it’s so important that we were there, Health and Wellness, Children and Youth Services and Education, when we were talking about setting the direction for children with special needs, because what we were saying to people inside government and the agencies we work with, to people in the community, is that we are going to work together and we want the people who work with us, to work together. But most importantly, the Protocol will help focus our efforts on these young people in more purposeful ways to help them succeed as individuals.

And the fundamental to that delivery of this initiative, as I have said, is collaboration. Government, and I know you will be shocked when I say this, doesn’t have the answers. It’s not something, and as Chief Rose just said at the table, “It’s not what we can do for you. This is not about more things we can do for people. It’s about how we can do it together.” When we began this process, we realized in order to be successful we have to be collaborative. We have to be partners. We have to involve our stakeholders.

The long and short of it is, we need to talk to each other and keep talking until solutions become evident.

The Protocol was drafted and revised by Children and Youth Services and Education based on stakeholder consultation, review of research and current best practices and learnings from four demonstration sites. The demonstration sites in urban, rural and FNMI communities are providing valuable information with respect to systemic issues and pressures related to implementation. So it’s a work in progress.

The long and short of it is, we need to talk to each other and keep talking until solutions become evident. We have been talking around the Province about “Inspiring Education” over the last eighteen months and the stated purpose of the “Inspiring Education” dialogue is what it will mean to be an educated Albertan twenty years from now. But the other purpose is to get people talking about education and its foundational value to our society and our community. The fact is, as we move forward, as we deal in an increasingly smaller world, we become not just local citizens, but global citizens and we have to be educated to play that role. We have to be educated to be a part of a global economy; and Alberta and our communities will have a role in the

economy. But we are competing with the world and we have to be as equipped as the world. Alberta will need to be educated to play that role in the world economy. We have to be equipped to play that role. So education is extremely important and it’s foundational to our community and to the individual.

As we keep talking together about our children, we have the opportunity to really examine how, as partners, we can work together to ensure our children and youth are being supported. When we come together to talk about change, it starts to become real.

On another level, the “Success in School for Children and Youth in Care Initiative” complements the work being done by Education under our business-planning goal, success for FNMI students. I see this as an opportunity for school jurisdictions to enhance their local strategies for FNMI education within their own operational plans.

And it fits in nicely with strategies within the Protocol Framework. Again, joint planning between teachers and caseworkers to be proactive rather than reactive when dealing with difficult situations for children.

We recognized the need to develop a tool for school jurisdictions to help them with their FNMI collaborative frameworks. Listening to jurisdictions’ needs, utilizing current research and paying attention to promising practices all became relevant in developing a conceptual model, the “Success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students: Conceptual Collaborative Model”.

Big title but it means a very simple thing: We need to sit together; we need to talk together; we need to work together. The vision for this initiative is that Aboriginal parents and communities are engaged in collaborative relationships with school staff based on trust, mutual understanding, and a shared commitment to the well-being and educational success of students.

This isn’t a new concept. Most of our relationships

It's not something, and as Chief Rose just said at the table, "It's not what we can do *for you*. This is not about more things we can do *for people*. It's about how we can do it together." When we began this process, we realized in order to be successful we have to be collaborative. We have to be partners. We have to involve our stakeholders.

begin with trust, begin with sitting down and talking together and eating together; begin with understanding of who we are together so we can work and understand what's important.

I can't stress enough how important parents and caregivers are to ensuring the value of education in a child's early years. The research shows that if we want a child to develop, talking to that child between the ages of zero to eighteen months is so important and is the single biggest thing to help them develop brain synapses and literacy skills. Presumably, while you are talking to the child or reading to a child you are actually holding that child which is so important for the child's developmental process.

Further collaboration in developing strategies for FNMI children in their early stages of development is essential and dramatically affects their likelihood of future educational success. Right now, we are on track to move to a more inclusive education system that accepts responsibility for all students and involves sharing a commitment to meet all students' needs. Perhaps more than any other challenge we face in education, this one requires collaboration by many partners to succeed.

This set the stage for the establishment of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Partnership Council last fall. Council membership includes elected officials from each partner organization: Treaties 6, 7 and 8; the Métis Nation of Alberta; the Métis Settlements General Council; the Ministries

of Education, Advanced Education and Technology, and Aboriginal Relations; and community representatives with knowledge and experience in First Nations, Métis and Inuit education.

From my perspective, this is a true partnership that requires commitment from all participants, and it will help to identify and complement the work we all must undertake within our areas and organizations to reduce and ultimately eliminate the gap in educational achievement.

And I call it a partnership but I do so advisedly. For a number of years after the "Commission On Learning Report" came out and there were a number of recommendations on First Nation/Métis education, one of the members was constantly advocating for a minister's advisory council. The purpose of that was to ensure the recommendations were being done, and to make sure other areas of First Nation/Métis education were a priority; and, quite frankly, I supported him on the idea right up until I became Minister of Education. Then I realized the last thing I needed was another advisory committee to tell me what I wasn't doing.

What we really needed was a partnership because we could be doing each and every one of those recommendations completely and thoroughly and still not be successful if kids weren't coming to school. We would still not be successful if families did not put an emphasis and value on education, still not be successful if parents did not realize that their children's

opportunity for success - if we were going to break the poverty cycle - if we were going to be successful, education was the way out and the way in. And unless we got that realization, the rest of it wasn't going to work; so, important but it wasn't going to be complete.

It wasn't the minister's advisory committee with a whole bunch of people telling us what we hadn't done yet and what we needed to do, but a partnership, a whole bunch of people coming together and saying, "We are in this together and it's our job as a group to raise the level of value in our society for education, to raise the understanding that for our children if we want our children to have a chance, it's education that's going to provide the opportunity."

As a speaker said at a conference I was at a month or so ago (but it's not new; it's been said before), "Education is our new buffalo"; that things we want and need to be successful will come from education for our children.

And so we created this partnership and I have a great deal of hope for that partnership and a great deal of trust in that partnership that will require us as leaders from government and from the community to make that commitment. And it is difficult because we are all running around doing all sorts of other things.

Yvonne and I were just talking about our average work-week when we were expected to be somewhere or do



Gord Johnston, Acting Deputy Minister, thanking Elder Mary Kappo for blessing the lunch

something. But in all of that, we have to have, and our partners have to have, the fundamental belief there is nothing more important than the time we spend, first of all, on our own kids and secondly, working together with others to make sure our children have a chance to be successful.

And they won't have a chance unless we focus on getting them the tools so they can maximize their own personal capacity and abilities, to find their passions, to find what they are good at, because everybody has value; everybody is good at something; everybody has something they can contribute back to their community. So I am very hopeful this partnership can provide this kind of leadership to help build in our communities that value for education, so the kids will be ready and willing and able to come to school.

We would still not be successful if families did not put an emphasis and value on education, still not be successful if parents did not realize that their children's opportunity for success - if we were going to break the poverty cycle - if we were going to be successful, education was the way out and the way in.



Hon. Dave Hancock engaged in discussion with Floyd Thompson

And then, from our part, whether it's the provincial education system or local school boards or whether it's the First Nation School educational system, we then have to have those teachers, role models and mentors who are there, who are ready, able and willing to engage those students when they are there and to help them find their passion and draw out their ability.

The feedback, the advice and the direction that we receive from parents and FNMI leadership and communities in this important process are fundamental to making true transformative change. There's absolutely no value at all in me going into a First Nation or Métis community and saying, "This is what you need to do." You know that even better than I do. It has happened too often when someone comes along and has said, "This is the way we are going to do it". So that partnership is extremely important. We need to work together. I also need to work with people who are prepared to say we might not know all the answers either. We need to work together.

But we can do more... We need to erase the jurisdictional barriers... when we start with the jurisdictional barriers we never get to the essential questions.

As many of you are aware, a new Memorandum of Understanding on Education between Alberta's First Nations, the Province, and the Federal Government was signed February of this year. I think it's an important step forward. The federal Minister's representative said he was amazed that we came to this agreement so quickly. We started at the end of June last year and by February we had signed an MOU. But you know and I know an MOU is an agreement that says we are going to continue to talk about the things that are in the agreement. Yes, it's important. Don't get me wrong. It's an important commitment by all the people who signed that agreement. But the job's not done. There's a lot more to do.

From my perspective, First Nation children and youth are citizens of our Province, and, as such, must have access to the high-quality education services enjoyed by all other Albertans. I know this can be achieved by placing children's needs first, above jurisdictional considerations, if we put the children first and decide what we are going to do. It doesn't matter if they live and study on-Reserve, if they are bused to provincial schools or if they live in our cities and towns.

Although First Nations are funded by the Federal Government to provide education to students living on-Reserve, Alberta Education has got to welcome opportunities to find new ways to support First Nation learners in ways that complement federal programs.

Teachers and liaison workers are also instrumental in developing effective learning strategies.

But we can do more - new times call for new teaching practices. We need to erase the jurisdictional barriers. I am not suggesting we ignore them. I am suggesting

That means we cannot look at our roles and responsibilities in a silo, that we need to understand we are working in partnership. What really is important is the child and whatever it takes for us to work within ethical boundaries, is what we must do.

we set them aside until we determine what needs to be accomplished in order to make sure our children can be successful and then, as reasonably intelligent people, we can come together. We can figure out how the jurisdictions work to accomplish that and what each of our roles is.

But when we start with the jurisdictional barriers we never get to the essential questions. And so, what we need to do is to understand that what we are doing is working first and foremost to put our children first because it is the only way we are going to be successful.

We can do more on the teaching side. As I mentioned before, once we have that value and those children are coming to school, we need to have those teachers who have the talents and the abilities to be role models and mentors.

The Government of Alberta is looking into ways to increase the number of FNMI teachers in the Province and ensure all teachers, whether FNMI or not, are prepared to teach FNMI learners and FNMI content in the curriculum. We talk about content in the curriculum. It's not just important that First Nation students understand First Nation content in the curriculum but all our students understand the foundation and history of our Province and our country.

The Northern Teacher Bursary Program is a partnership with the Northern Alberta Development Council that provides pre-service teachers (that means people who hope to be teachers and are going to school right now) with up to \$8,000.00 in funding for their last two years of study, in return for a commitment to work in a northern school jurisdiction for three years.

The Community Based Teacher Education Program is grant funding to cover tuition and costs of living for FNMI adults in northern Alberta. Thirty-eight education support staff from northern school districts qualified for this grant and started their program in September 2009. So we are on our way. It's a small part. It's a small start but one of the things I know is that we need role models and mentors for our children.

One of the privileges I had when I was Minister of Advanced Education was to be at Slave Lake to witness the signing of the agreement between the University of Alberta and the Northern Lights College. I met two people there who made a real impression on me. One was a Métis teacher from East Prairie who was teaching in High Prairie and waiting patiently for us to finish the school on East Prairie Métis Settlement so he could go home. He never would have got his education degree if he had to come out to Edmonton. It never would have happened. He has five children, a single parent. Jason Good Child is his name. Some of you may know him. He was able to get his education because we were able to create a partnership, which allowed him to get his education closer to home. That's how he was able to get his education degree. And the net result is that he is a role model and mentor to other children on the East Prairie Métis Settlement. He can say to them, "You can be successful. You can leave here and be something. You can stay here and be successful because it is in you."

Another young lady was from Wabasca and teaching in Slave Lake. But that's important. And that's why we have over the last year done these partnerships for the bursaries with Northern Alberta Development

Council and the community based teacher education program and programs with Northlands School Division.

If we are going to close the gap once and for all, we need to embrace change and drive change and that means we need to change the way we do things. That means we cannot look at our roles and responsibilities in a silo, that we need to understand we are working in partnership. What really is important is the child and whatever it takes for us to work within ethical boundaries, is what we must do.

I want to give you a little example of why it is so important. I had the privilege of being at an annual JAC general meeting. I think it stands for Joint Advisory Committee. It is school boards and child and family agencies.

A young lady was astounding. She was about twenty-three years. She was speaking as a survivor of the foster care system. She is of Aboriginal background. She said she had eight foster parents before she found her forever home. She said, "I understand why the system works in the way it does. I understand that the objective is for me to be back with my biological family, to bring the family back together. There was family violence and issues so there were different opportunities for me to go home. But I also knew they could not keep my foster family waiting for me because the expectation is that it will work each time. I understand all that. What I don't understand is why you ripped me out of my school every time. School was the only place where I had stability." Her parents moved a lot and that's why she changed schools.

She said, "In Grade 3, I went back to the same school once. And the kids there thought I was dead [because they knew she had difficulties at home]. The kids thought I was dead. The teacher thought I was dead." Nobody bothered to tell anybody where she had gone. She told us how that made her feel.

In Grade 6, she had a teacher who took the time to ask why she was late for school all the time. She didn't



Hon. Yvonne Fritz, Hon. Dave Hancock

penalize her, send her to the office, and do all the other things she could have done. When she explained to the teacher that she was responsible for getting her younger brothers and sisters to school, because her parents weren't capable of doing it, that took time and so she was the last one out. That changed the relationship with the teacher. Having that understanding allowed the teacher an ability to assist her, help her understand her situation. Sometimes the teacher would help. The teacher would give her some clothes or a winter coat or sometimes food without making a fuss. It was that trust relationship she built at school with that teacher that provided her with a way out, a door, a way to know that there was somebody in her life who cared at that point in time.

I tell that story quite a lot actually because for me it's very powerful. In fact, I seldom can get through it without shedding a tear. She was a survivor. She was well poised. She was twenty-three. She was back

...we are not in this alone.
We cannot do this by ourselves.

actually helping, working in a caring industry to provide help to others. And she found a family, what she calls a forever home. She was well adjusted.

But it might have been by accident rather than by design that she found a teacher who created some of those connections and made her believe that she was important. And it should be by design for each and every one of our children because we can do that. But it's not a lack of caring, because we care. But if we treat our children as files and as a job and we don't work together as people who care in the communities as teachers, as social workers, as caring agencies, then we will miss that child. So it is important the work we are doing.

I am so lucky to be able to work with Yvonne who is teaching me that this isn't about being in Children and Youth Services and having responsibility for this file; and certainly isn't being in Education and saying that if you come in my doors I will teach you. It's about understanding this is about children and children come in all sorts of different sizes and shapes, with all sorts of difficulties and barriers to success.

And if we can pool our resources to understand it's our job to help that child with each of those barriers to success, and provide the role models and mentors who can reach into them and find their value and what they are good at, and show it to them and help them understand it, help them appreciate it, help them discover it, help them build it, then we will be creating citizens who will be able to say that we all share in the bounty

of this Province we have been blessed with and we all have the opportunity to provide back to this Province and create an even better place for those who follow us.

We need to change our approach to teaching so that we can engage our FNMI students and inspire them to succeed in our 21st century world. The nature of education is changing. Students are no longer learning the same things in the same ways. All of us must take responsibility to ensure all of our students, including our FNMI students, are supported in their journey through school in ways that are culturally meaningful and relevant.

And together, we can ensure our FNMI students receive the learning supports they need, family supports they need. When children come to school they bring all their capacities and all their barriers. And it's our job to find those capacities and help them eliminate those barriers.

You are doing so well in so many areas. And I am just so excited that you are here today talking at this "Gathering Today For Our Aboriginal Children's Future". And that's really what it takes. It's for us to understand that we are not in this alone. We cannot do this by ourselves. I don't have a magic wand as Minister of Education that will just make it right. Yvonne doesn't have a magic wand as Minister of Children and Youth Services that will make it happen.

The only way we can do this is when we say as a community that our children are too good to lose. And we can play a role in making sure each and every one can be successful and be a contributing citizen and give something back to their community.

Thank you for what you do every day for the children of Alberta.



(Note: Speakers are quoted verbatim except for minor edits. Sometimes it was not possible to hear clearly what was being said due to ambient noises. Therefore, not everything people said could be transcribed.)

Introduction - Audrey Breaker, Chair, Siksika Nation Family Services Corporation

Thank you for asking me to be on the Planning Committee. I enjoyed that. For the first time I had the opportunity to work with your office, and I enjoyed that.

I am the Chair of Siksika Nation Family Service Corporation and it has been a real learning for me. It has been a real privilege to work with Family Services. For years I was a teacher and I could see the problems that existed in Family Services. Last year when I was asked to sit on the Board of Directors I said to myself, "I think I could do that." It has been a real learning for me and I really appreciate that.

This afternoon, because of time, even though we had a great lunch and a great speaker, we have to cut short

our last focus group discussion.

This afternoon, we are supposed to focus on resource challenges and opportunities.

As you know, we all work in different areas and our access to funding and resources varies across the Province; and it's a struggle for many of us. Siksika is in a different kind of situation where we provide services to clients both on and off Reserve. So we certainly face many challenges.

This morning we spoke of serving our children and I want to give some recognition to our Chiefs who spoke this morning because they really hit the nail on the head on some of the issues and concerns they brought to the table. Chief Rose, Chief James and Chief Allan who was here previously - they know what the problems are and we all know and we recognize them. There were some great points that were made this morning.

But what we have to do now is focus on what our solutions are going to be, and how we are going to build those relationships to make them a lot stronger and not just pay lip service to them. We need to be really serious and committed.

So when we talk about resources and challenges this afternoon let's focus on those solutions and what are the best practices. And let's come together for the sake of our children.

So that's what we are going to do this afternoon and we are going to have the big round table discussion, not small group discussions. At the end, we will talk about next steps and where we go from here. I am hoping it's not the last time we sit at the table together.

So the first question is, "How have funding constraints impacted services?" And I think when you look at each of our situations there are a variety of answers to that. The second is, "What can we do to improve trilateral partnerships?" And the third is, "How can we work together through partnerships and consultation to maximize our resources?"

So I leave it with you. And I hope we can come to some conclusions.

Lorne Morin

It's a nice mixture to have Education, Health and Wellness and Children and Family Services work together. Strong messages were sent today. But talk is one thing; doing is another. We need communication. Communication is the focus and key of this first meeting today, and all of us networking together and understanding where we are coming from as First Nations and all the agencies.

We need to pick up the phone to the First Nations when a child is involved. These agencies need to pick up the phone and talk to us. Communication is key and this is the first step and that's what we're lacking whether you are delegated or non-delegated. We are lacking in communication. Agencies need to talk with us. We need to come away from here and commit to that.

The one big thing I spoke of is the finances. We know what the problems are. We need to be treated on a level playing field and give everybody the finances whether you are on Reserve or off Reserve. And the Federal Government will reimburse the Province. We



Hon. Yvonne Fritz, John Phillips, Audrey Breaker

need the ministers and everyone to support that. And, if collectively across Alberta all the different agencies can support that, the Federal Government will.

One thing I mentioned from time to time to people is when Obama and Harper announced the stimulus package, all across North America I don't think one First Nations got a dime. Part of that stimulus package will be helping First Nations take care of their economics and in turn, help take care of the housing crisis that we have on Nations. Somehow, some way, the Provinces across this country need to force the Federal Government to include First Nations as part of that stimulus package which will have huge spin off effects in taking care of our shortfalls that we have. And I know they say money isn't everything but we all need money. We are short for workers, short for houses.

So I think these are the things we need to do.

Chief Carolyn Buffalo

I have a practical solution and I mentioned it in our group this morning. Minister Hancock referred to it in his keynote lunch address. This is a copy of the MOU we signed with the Province. It was signed by Minister Hancock on behalf of the Province, and Chuck Strahl and the Grand Chiefs. It is to work on all gaps in education. We should do the same thing in Children Services because we are dealing with no less a crisis here. Really, we have so many kids in care. We are

just a small part of the population; yet the vast majority of kids in care are ours. So that means we have to do things differently. We have to do things better.

We all need to be at the table. We can talk about funding all day long but if INAC is not here at the table, how far are we going to get? All of us have to be at the table, all at the same time. I think if we pursue the idea of an MOU and you know, Minister, I raised this when we had our Protocol meeting at the Legislature, and I raised it on behalf of the Chiefs of Treaty 6. When we met with the Premier pursuant to the Protocol Agreement last Monday, it was brought up again. I know that INAC is interested. They have not made a commitment yet but I know if we sat down with them, and said, "Let's develop a process" - and I know, as the Minister said at lunchtime, an MOU is only agreement to work together; but it is still significant in that we have made a concrete agreement pursuant to the MOU that we will do things in a specific way.

We had a great signing ceremony, a pipe ceremony which is very important in our community. It



Chief Carolyn Buffalo

Every day those children that need services go without, that's a day in their childhood that's gone, that they will never get back.

signifies the commitment that was there for us to do things better.

When it comes to education, talking about children, so many of those same children we are going to be talking about are the same kids we will be talking about here, a lot of our kids are in care. So I think we should seriously consider this. I know the Chiefs are in favour and INAC is willing to discuss it. I think we need to see if there is willingness on the part of the Province.

When you look at the amount of knowledge right here in this room ... I think that most of the answers are in the room and we need to collectively gather all of that information and then sit down with the other parties and say, "Look here's how we can do things better." I just want to proffer that as a practical way for us to talk, just to set out future dialogue.

I also think we need to have a process for the DFNAs themselves to get together on a regular basis. Again, a huge brain trust right there.

Also the non-delegated First Nations need to get together and compare notes and they can talk about what's working, what's not working. Like when we have our Board meetings we have great discussions but we're siloed. We are isolated. We do get together with the other DFNAs at conferences. But if there was a formalized process for us to get together, so we can talk about common issues and how we can do things better, what are the resources we can tap into, how can we enter into partnerships with each other - if that process was set up on a regular go forward basis, that's another way that we can achieve some things because again, great brain trust.

When I think about the front line workers working with our children and the stresses they have to go through - we just had a Board meeting last night and we heard how stressful their work is and how the last thing you want to do is to take a child out of their home. We need to support each other as well because sometimes you do feel alone.

And lastly, I just want to finish off by saying, please support Jordan's Principle, in actions not just words, because it's children. Every day those children that need services go without, that's a day in their childhood that's gone, that they will never get back. So it's great to say Jordan's Principle is wonderful. Who could argue against it? Who in their right mind would say it's a bad thing. Everybody who talks about it says how wonderful it is. But who is really doing anything about it?

(Note: The MOU is called "Memorandum Of Understanding for First Nations Education in Alberta". It is available at <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/fnmi.aspx>. The MOU is attached as Appendix 2.)

Audrey Franklin

I would ask that CFSAs be included in DFNA and non-delegated meetings because we have the children as well; and so we can gain greater understanding of each other. We would be pleased to be at that table.

Chief Rose Laboucan

We need to address racism and unfairness, the inequities.

The smallest population has the largest children in care. It is a crisis regardless of how you look at it. And how we address this is what I am hoping this is about. When we all work together, we all win together. So if we look at it from that perspective, we can move forward.

I had the occasion, it was not even an occasion; it was a really sad occasion when a mom's children were going to be apprehended. And she said, "I can't give my children what they might be able to get if they are taken care of by somebody else. At least they will have a bike; at least they'll have new clothes. But, [and this is with tears in her eyes] but don't get me wrong, I love my children."

Because of the economy - the way it is - and for young moms that are struggling, if they are feeling that somebody can love them more by giving material things, that's a pretty sad situation. And we have many of these stories.

When we all work together, we all win together.

Overall, the media covers us as not caring, of not taking care of our own, of not loving our children. If you were to look at those sad situations I bet you anything they would tell you that it's because those mothers love their children so much that they want to give them something, and that's why they end up in care. That's why I think it is very crucial we have to work with the families. We don't have a choice.

For Driftpile First Nation, we are going to build a safe home. Our children are not going to be taken away anymore. It gives me lines of communication so we can work with the families.

We live in a contemporary society, and our people need to fit in no matter where they go. And they can if they have that strong foundation and if they have their dignity intact. They can get anywhere and go anywhere.

But if we do not include in this country, in this

One day, when our children are healthy in mind, body, spirit, and emotionally, they will embrace who they are, hopefully.

Province, that we are the First People of this country, that we do have a history; we have culture, we have traditions; we are very unique. We have a multitude of languages that are not even accommodated in this country. We are magnificent no matter how I look at it. The rest of society should know that, not only here in Canada but internationally. The world needs to know.

We've survived this long and to finally have a meeting with Children and Youth Services, with First Nations, with the Federal Government looking at the child first and foremost and only that child. The barriers that are created are institutionalized and are policy driven. Those are all the barriers that child, not knowing, is facing today. We are part of that as adults.

We need to go back to that child and say how do we best look after this child. Even in Indian reservations, we have the silos. We have health; we have education; we have this; we have that. We are working really hard to collaborate our efforts even in my Nation. We have an interagency with all the departments working



Chief Carolyn Buffalo, Loïse Arcand

together and really trying to look at some outcomes.

We're tired of being ashamed of being who we are. We are tired of not having our own traditions, our own culture. Our own people are straying away from it. Our own people are saying our culture, our language are not good enough. We want to be something else and do something else, and do a different prayer because of the assimilation process. And that is so sad.

One day, when our children are healthy in mind, body, spirit, and emotionally, they will embrace who they are, hopefully.

It doesn't matter if anyone else wants to embrace it. If you do it yourself, you're going somewhere. That's part of the process of decolonizing ourselves. That's a long, big task and that's not saying we are being mean to anyone. As a matter of fact, I am more accepting of you and you because I decolonized. And I am in that process. But to understand and appreciate and own it, that's something else - and then I don't have a problem walking in your world or anybody's world.

I am proud of who I am. That's how I want our children to be. That's the hope I have for them because they can be the doctors. They can be the lawyers. They can be the next Prime Minister of this country as far as I am concerned.

For once, when we met with the Premier, resources and revenue sharing was on the table. So for the first time in history resource sharing was on the agenda, on the agenda, written down on a piece of paper in front of the Premier. I think that's history. I think that's a move forward, just as the MOU in education, and just as how we will collaborate and look at this trilateral process and how we are going to make it work, not for you, not for me, but for that child so they have a future; so they have hope.

We have so much work to do and not enough time. We have to have a table to talk about issues and to be open about it, to be open about the unjust society that



Left to right: Brian Lee, Bill Clark, John Phillips

we've lived in.

Just because I am on an Indian Reserve doesn't make me less than, or less than parent, than anyone else who is on the other side.

The schools, for a long time, they made a profit off our children. They kept them to the end of October until the nominal role was done and then they were down the road: but the money stayed.

I'm sorry, but that's what I saw in Children Services too. They kept the children. You were supposed to be distant, not love them. How did the child survive? No wonder there were suicides. Every child needs to be loved regardless of where they're at or who they stay with.

I don't want to talk about the shortfall of money because we know it's there. My foster home in Drift-pile does not get the same as a foster home in an urban setting and that's the truth. When we look at it, how do we come up with the solutions to make that difference?

We need to sit down and really look at a plan on how

to work with all the families. Like in education, education is about pedagogy; it's not about politics. I don't want to hear about jurisdiction right now. I want to know how we can get the best results in educating all our children and graduating them.

Kevin Provost

In terms of funding constraints, I guess for me, what we are seeing with funding constraints is we just don't have - we have the educated people - we don't have money. And I am proud to say I was at an education meeting yesterday and we have nine of our post-secondary students who just graduated. But we don't have enough funds to attract graduates back. And they are off looking for other positions. Children and Youth Services is providing a comparable fund.

However, there is too much work and not enough people. One of the key factors in speaking with some of the staff is we need a case assessor so when a case comes in we have someone who can make that assessment to say this is child protection or child enhancement. The Province has that luxury but we don't and

... it is vital that we not forget there are a lot of Aboriginals that are not status but still face the same Aboriginal issues in a racist society and they don't have the support that the First Nations provide.

it causes negative effects; and that's why those rates are going up. We aren't getting enough money to have that personnel or resource to make that judgment. They are forced into child protection; but actually if there was family counseling, it might not happen.

We talked at the Council table that we need to fund the entire family rather than just worrying about one child in protection. If we can hire sufficient staff, that would help us out in reducing some of those numbers and working with families so the child can stay rather than go into the system.

John Phillips

It's important to keep focused on what we are trying to do here. DFNAs and Regions should look at what we are in a position to address in trying to dovetail our services in trying to eliminate duplication, avoid cracks and make it the best we can do.

Without the feds at the table, in talking about the funding aspects, we can't fix the funding aspect.

If we can focus on what we can do and if can get something working, then we might be in a position to have a united front. We can then approach the feds, I don't know, maybe shaming them, to get them to do more or get more involved.

If we look at the bigger picture of the Aboriginal situation, question, issue, this is not something we can do alone. But if we do start getting into those sorts of discussions, it is vital that we not forget there are a lot of Aboriginals that are not status but still face the same Aboriginal issues in a racist society and they don't have the support that the First Nations provide. I think it's important that we do not lose sight of that. This is something we need to focus on - what we, as this group, can do because this is such a complex issue.

Audrey Franklin

We have to heal our history as Aboriginal people. We have to heal our families before we can help our children. And it's the families themselves that will heal the children, heal the grief and the trauma caused by residential schools or by other vehicles that were used. They have said policy was one of them and schools. If we could heal the history, the trauma and grief of parents and then they would be healthy enough to heal their children and heal the children's spirit. That spirit was broken because it was traumatized and it needs to be attended to.

But the question is, how have funding constraints impacted services. Recession is a time of correction. We are doing more with less. I believe you can't buy love. As individuals, we can show some loving gestures to children even if they are not our own. That's where we can begin. Healing is such an important issue and definitely communication among all of us DFNAs, CFSAs, Métis.

So we need to work together. We need to work together and not let those jurisdictional boundaries (Métis, DFNAs and CFSAs) ... let's bypass jurisdictional boundaries and let's become humanistic and say we are doing this for the child.

Valerie Kaufman

I just want to build on Carolyn's idea of building capacity within ourselves, within the DFNAs, CFSAs, and non-delegated First Nations. I really was privileged to go to ... and Lorne, this is kudos for your operation ... Yellowhead Tribal Services that provided a training opportunity. For the first time in 30 years, I saw an Aboriginal training package that was developed specifically from a traditional base of knowledge and it was shared with people at that conference. Some of you folks may have been there. I think probably all of you have some of those resources. We talk about capacity and it's really hard to define because every body has a different idea about what capacity building is. But it includes training. Yellowhead Tribal Services is to be commended for the traditional training package they provide for caregivers. I was really, really impressed with it. Thanks to your organization, Lorne. I wish it could be shared more broadly.

Rose Lameman

I also wanted to reiterate, funding needs to change.

We need more meetings between the DFNAs and CFSAs. And I think training by Aboriginal people to non-Aboriginals is very essential and is not just a three-day training package but an on-going regular occurrence not only just for staff but also for foster parents and everyone in general. In listening to all points made this morning, there were a lot of similarities. Part of that was cultural training; lack of decolonization.

I would like to have other meetings on a regular on-going basis between the DFNAs and CFSAs.

Someone said we should pick up the phone and talk to the leadership. Now there's a protocol around that. From what I understand, the leaders don't want civil servants calling them, talking to them about child welfare issues. They would rather speak with the Ministry or the Minister. That's the understanding I have. There's some kind of communication gap and a lot of discrepancy that we need to work out so we are not so confused.



John Mould speaking to the group



Participants listen attentively to Chief James Ahnassay

Gord Johnston

The Agreement that the Treaty Chiefs and the Premier signed is clear about the protocol about how the Premier and the Chiefs will communicate on a regular and on-going basis, but it does not preclude CSFA and DFNA's boards communicating with each other on a regular and on-going basis.

Chief James Ahnassay

When I was notified of this meeting I had North Peace Tribal Council staff come together and go through a series of brainstorming. We came up with a briefing that I want to give to Minister Fritz this morning. But instead of going through the whole package, I just want to catch up on some of the outcomes, the "Next Steps":

- Funding for cultural resources to promote cultural awareness.
- Another one mentioned earlier and reflects on the protocol issues where each First Nation has a First Nation Designate, a point person that agencies can go to. If need be, they can take matters to the Council at some point. That's how we use the Designate position.

- The other one is also to work on the legislation that there should be consultation with each First Nation. Right now, the only consultation that is mentioned in the legislation is in the case of the DFNA, the Director is the Designate. That's where the consultation comes from. But that does not always work, as I explained this morning. Initial contact with the family should be done regardless of consent. Right now there is a limitation. If off Reserve, then there is contact with the Nation; but if it is on Reserve, then there

has to be consent. It does not work consistently. All apprehensions should be reported to the Nation.

- For cost efficiency, it would benefit First Nations to have secured facilities to deliver services.
- Funding and support from the Ministry should be so First Nation children, youth, and families are provided the best service delivery within the First Nation.
- Training for staff is made available in the North.
- Provincial support and funding to ensure that the DFNA's service model for workloads, recruitment, and retention of staff are comparable to provincial CFSA's delivery models.
- Kinship homes to be funded equally to general homes; and licensing for off Reserve homes are approved by the DFNA. Right now the way things are set up, off Reserve agencies have licensing and it's not efficient and it's like a third party approving homes for DFNAs.
- Also, in some cases, there is a need for advocacy. And sometimes Chiefs and Council pass

resolutions and sometimes resolutions are provided to agencies and the Ministry. But in most cases it appears that these Chief and Council decisions are being ignored.

- Funding and support for ongoing comparable service delivery needs to be addressed between the federal and provincial levels of government.
- Province to support First Nations in ensuring Jordan's Principle is recognized in Alberta. Also initiatives administered on Reserve are funded appropriately to ensure that proper follow-through is completed for Nation members.
- Lastly, work together with First Nations to develop a strong service delivery strategy that will focus on development of a model to promote a healthy family approach to community and the members facing this challenge.

So, those are some of the next steps provided by the group yesterday and you are more than free to also include this in the report so others can have a copy if they want.

Loiselle Arcand

This type of a meeting has been long overdue and I am very honoured to be here today.

As I mentioned in the group I was in this morning, Alexander is one of the few First Nations left that have not taken on delegated services. We heard our Chief speak this morning about inequality of services.

I admire our Chief Rose Laboucan and her words. She always has powerful words to say about children

and our communities and the direction we need to be moving in to be able to make changes in our own community. I was glad to hear the Chief say this is not about whether you are delegated or non-delegated. It is about looking after our children and how we can do that together.

Alexander receives services from Region 6 and I am proud to say we have a wonderful working relationship with the Province. They certainly know where Alexander stands when it comes to our children.

We, as Alexander, have had to make a commitment. We had to make that commitment and say we have a vested interest in our children. We want to be part of what happens. We have to make that commitment we have to be out there visiting. We have to be out there checking on our kids in non-Aboriginal foster homes. We, as First Nations, have to make that commitment and meet Children Services half way and not just leave the job up to them.

We always say we are the experts when it comes to our own people. It's time for us to walk our own talk in that area as well if we are truly sincere about doing something and making a better future for our children, families, and our communities. This is a prime opportunity for us to come together and to do that.

We work really hard with the Province. Sure, we have our differences but we need to come to an agreement in the best interest of the families we work with. This is not about me. This is not a power struggle as to who is right and who is wrong. It's about not bringing any more children into care. It's about finding permanent homes for our children who are PGO. It's about

We always say we are the experts when it comes to our own people. It's time for us to walk our own talk in that area as well if we are truly sincere about doing something and making a better future for our children, families, and our communities.

figuring innovative ways that we can introduce prevention into our communities. It's all about those kinds of things we need to start looking at.

I am really glad to part of the meeting here today and to take part. I know it's been said this morning but I hope this is just the beginning. I've been to a lot of meetings where there is lot of talk but no action. So I am hoping as a result of today's meeting and more meetings to come, that we are going to see some action, to start seeing some different ways we can do business within our communities, how we can do business with the Province. Indian Affairs for sure needs to be a part of this process as well.

Gerrad Oishi

John and I had a chance to chat briefly over lunch. We were quite enthused about the conversation we had this morning. We had an opportunity to ask our colleagues of Tsuu T'ina and Siksika that when we bring a child into care, part of permanency planning is to contact the Band and do it in partnership. But it sounds like there is an opportunity and work to be done to improve the way we do that. John and I are going home now with an opportunity to explore this within our organization and with our counterparts. So I am looking forward to that.

Marcel Weasel Head

One of the things I discussed today and what the Chiefs talked about earlier is a lot of the barriers we have and the challenges we have. It's important that we are heard. We have a lot of ideas and expertise in our community and it shows. Many of our people continue to pursue education and come back and work for our tribes.

In 2005, the Chief and Council of the day asked for a moratorium on adoptions because at the end of the day when our kids, our members, come of age they return home, and they have lost a lot of their identity.



Marcel Weasel Head

That's the thing we want to stress is we have to begin to work together and be involved. We have to be involved from day one.

We have to look at solutions and come out of this today with answers.

I talked with the Chief on the way up. We talk about it on a daily basis. We are tired of spinning our wheels. Where do we go from here to here?

We have a statement to be the healthiest community by 2025. How do we get there? We have to have everybody on board - all the departments. No more being territorial; no more saying this is my program. It has to be in the best interest of the kids. This goes for off Reserve or on Reserve, programs, regions, offices that we work closely with. We have to partner up and put aside our differences. That's the only way we will succeed.

As far as funding, the thing about it is that we should be at the table discussing it, especially when it comes to funding formulas. It seems like at the end of the day whatever money is available, we are all fighting for the dollars available throughout Alberta. This causes a lot of tension. We are fighting for nickels and dimes.

Chief mentioned too, one of the things that's scary nowadays is they are talking about OSR, own source revenue. What the government is talking about is that we need to start providing our revenue to provide that service. It's our right, our treaty right. These are the things that are being ignored. We need to step back and look at a lot of these historic treaty agreements. But in moving forward, we have to be at the forefront of the table at all times when it comes to discussions and how we can best serve our people because we feel we are being unfairly treated.

Sharon Anderson

There have been some conversations about jurisdiction, about federal/provincial and working together in spite of boundaries or jurisdiction. At the grass roots and ground level it's for "our Aboriginal children", not just First Nation or Métis. There is a Métis Settlement with children within the system. For the sake of the children in care, we also need to move away at the grass roots level from saying, "I am a First Nation or I am a Métis".

There were a couple references made this morning about the power in this room. I was always of the opinion that as Aboriginal people if we get together, First Nations Métis, Inuit, if we get together and we have a single voice, we have an awful lot of power if we choose to work together to address some of those issues that affect our children. We have a lot of force behind us if we strive to work together.

Tom Wickersham

Thank you, Gord. We, as non-Aboriginals, have not participated vocally very much at the round table other than in our group discussions. For myself, it is an honor to be here with all the partners in Alberta trying to address the needs of children in care and be sensitive to those different needs.

It is humbling for me to hear the stories. It's emotional to hear the stories of children being separated from their parents and the love that those parents have for their children and some of the situations that provoke that separation.

I believe today for myself, to develop the relationships, to develop that understanding, is invaluable; to understand the tradition and history and pick up some of that past, and we have to learn from the past to change the future, I believe.

I know in the southwest one of the benefits ... and Sharon has had to leave. Sharon is my Aboriginal Co-Chair ... as we Co-Chair in the southwest, I found it very beneficial to meet with Marcel and Susan Bare Shin Bone. And a couple of days ago we went on a tour of the Blood Tribe Children Services, Kainai Children Services and to see the work that is being done in the region and to understand the commitment of the staff and how they're making a difference with those children in care. It has a significant impact on us. We definitely want that communication. We want that partnership, working together; and I believe we're developing that and will continue to develop that.

Marcel made an important statement for me this morning in saying that we need on a governance level, as we are having on a governance level, we really need to get that down to our CEOs and front line workers and we have to encourage them to get together and to discuss and create understanding of the difficulties both sides are having. And if we find things in legislation that are barriers to us reaching out and ministering and helping families and children, then maybe then we



Front Row: Heather Rann, Gerrad Oishi, Myrna Rabbit; Back Row: Ron Gaida, Rose Lameman, Darwin Soosay

can bring those issues as one body to our government. And we can make suggestions to our government as one body, speaking with one voice, saying these are the barriers that we are finding that prohibit us making a difference and creating change within our communities.

So to me this has been very beneficial and very powerful. I believe something is happening today here in this room that will have lasting effects. I believe that we will be not only listeners today and hearers today but that we will be people of action and actually things will happen because we have met here today and we are determined to come together.

Having said that, thank you very much for the opportunity, Minister Fritz and Gord, for facilitating this and bringing us together and hearing and understanding and helping us work together for children.

I would be remiss, because I didn't want to miss our friend and partner, Kevin, because he paid us a high compliment today as Child and Family Services Southwest. Kevin, I appreciate that you mentioned

I believe something is happening today here in this room that will have lasting effects. I believe things will happen because we have met here today and we are determined to come together.

you felt that we work well together. Yes, you folks are struggling right now because you have lost a very important person and you are trying to find a replacement there. I believe that together we will be stronger working together. I really appreciate that you recognize that we're working together and have a good relationship with our First Nations people. I hadn't met Kevin before but we had some conversations, and I think that will continue. So thank you very much, Kevin.



Joey Hamelin, Chief Carolyn Buffalo, Loïselle Arcand



Gord Johnson, Loïselle Arcand, Chief Allan Paul



Myrna Rabbit, Darwin Soosay



Ken Serr, Heather Rann, Brian Broughton



Hon. Yvonne Fritz

I am not going to speak very long. We've had a very productive day, a very good day.

During the day, we had our Elders and their blessings throughout the day. We had our Child and Youth Advocate speak very seriously about what he's observed over his number of years as the Advocate and about the solutions that he saw. Minister Hancock talked about "Inspiring Education" and setting direction for education and that it should be inclusive, especially for our Aboriginal children, youth and families, and communities.

It has been an amazing day. But what's made it even more powerful is the contribution that all of you have made today.

For today to happen - because this has come together very quickly - it has come together because of the excellent planning that has gone into today. It took enormous work to do that through the Planning Committee.

I am going to ask the Planning Committee members to stand when I say their names. We have Sara Potts who was on the Planning Committee - thank you Sara; Gerrad Oishi, - thank you, Gerrad; Judy Ostrowski - Judy had to leave early, but we thank her; Audrey

is here, Audrey Breaker, thank you; Joanna Gladue, thank you, Joanna; and Theresa Bull, thank you, Theresa. We also had Mary Jane Graham, and Betty Forster. Fred Anderson, who many of you know, could not be with us here today. Thank you all. They were an amazing group that put this together as a Planning Committee and for that we all thank you, even coming up with what the meeting was called today. We won't forget this day. We would like to give you all a big hand.

Now, we discussed some very tough issues today. Some are long standing issues. I have listened very carefully, and I had an opportunity to be in some of the discussion meetings.

I go back to what you contributed. I know the tremendous effort it took for some of you to be here. I think that Marcel Weasel Head said it very well in one of the discussion groups. And I may not quote your words exactly, Marcel; but what I recall Marcel saying is, there is always crisis for every one of us to be dealing with on Reserve; and I think you talked about three people, and some issues on the Blood Reserve ... but you are here. And it's the same for many of you. Chief Rose said she was not feeling well, but she is here. I have spoken with some Chiefs who have very huge issues going on. But you all made the commitment to be here. It is because you know the issues are tough and, as I said, they are long standing.

I know this is the beginning. I believe that. It is the beginning of the development of some good relationships but it is not the end of our work and I want you

**I know this is the beginning...
It is the beginning of the development
of some good relationships but it
is not the end of our work**

to know that. I've heard that too, that we need to come together again.

But what I did hear though from you ... and I hope I am going to frame this right in that you will know how I, as a Minister, heard what you have asked me to do ... what I heard you say is that I, as a Minister, I have to have the willingness to formalize the commitment to make change; that I need to have the willingness to ensure that there is a tripartite process that includes our Ministry of Children and Youth Services. It includes the Federal Government, but most importantly, it includes Alberta First Nations, our First Nations here in Alberta. That's what I am talking about.

And in our willingness to formalize agreements, the tripartite agreement, we will create and ensure equity for our Aboriginal children on and off Reserve. And we need to do it in a time frame that is before the next election. We know from our Premier that it will be in March 2012. That means we have a 12-month window to make this happen.

But the formalizing of the agreement that as a Minister I am willing to do is the Memorandum of Understanding. Chief Carolyn Buffalo spoke to that very eloquently. I was at the Protocol Agreement meeting at the Legislature. Chief Weasel Head and the Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Len Webber, co-chaired that meeting. Many of you were at that meeting as well and you know it came to the table at that time. And we are working through our Ministry in understanding what that will even look like as we come to a formalized agreement. But more importantly, we need to work with our Co-Chairs on the Protocol Agreement because there are

But cultural training actually has to be balanced. It's not only for our staff, Board members, and others in the CFSAs but also for Delegated First Nation Agencies to learn about what is happening through our CFSAs too.

many complex steps that need to be taken but I am certainly very committed to making that happen, the Memorandum of Understanding.

The other area that I want to mention as well, and I think this is critical, and that is the area of cultural training. Many of you spoke to that. Along with cultural training, is a curriculum of training. You also need capacity.

Lorne Morin of Yellowhead Tribal Services, we heard earlier, has a good training program that we can take as a model and adapt and fit it to educate our staff and others we feel in our Child and Family



Front Row: Kevin Provost, Cecilia Machatis, Rose Lameman, Ken Serr; Back Row: Hon Yvonne Fritz, Loiselle Arcand

Services Authorities and service agencies who may need cultural training. But cultural training actually has to be balanced. It's not only for our staff, Board members, and others in the CFSAs but also for Delegated First Nation Agencies to learn about what is happening through our CFSAs too. And we can take that model even further into the whole Province of Alberta for other children and youth in care.

Those are the kind of issues that I heard you bring forward in discussions today. I know that all are underpinned with funding. I realize that. But we need to continue with the discussions. And for myself as a Minister in a leadership position, I can commit to you today that I will advocate doing these things. You will be hearing from me in a variety of ways about how I work toward achieving what needs to be done. This is a very serious issue.

We had Gerrad Oishi and John Phillips, Co-Chairs from Calgary Child and Family Services Authorities,



Elder Mary Kappo, Hon. Yvonne Fritz



Back: Audrey Franklin; Front: Marcel Weasel Head, Tom Wickersham, Karen Egge engaged in conversation.

share with our Treasury Minister, Lloyd Snelgrove, about ten days ago, some statistics. And that's what we need to continue to do with other areas and that includes Métis and First Nations. He needs to hear the statistics and what's happening out there if we are going to ask for funding for child intervention.

The statistics like this - and we heard a lot about data collection today and we are going to start collecting data - that data showed that in Calgary, for example, when the Calgary Police receive calls, over 12,000 coming in are related to domestic violence. When the police attend, 75% of those calls involve children. That means our Child and Family Services Authorities staff attend and, in the end, conduct investigations and assessments. That's huge in just one jurisdiction and this is real data. What does this mean? And how do we extrapolate that and what does that tell us?

Did you know that in Calgary the domestic violence has increased this year? Many of you know your own statistics in your own areas. We need to have data, as it will help with tripartite discussions, with funding, with a commitment to an MOU for us in Children and Youth Services.



We need to do that. This is a shared responsibility. There are shared solutions - we've heard that today as well. It is collaboration. It is partnerships. As I said, it is a serious issue.

But I found today uplifting too. It has been a good day, and that's because of you around the table. You are very sophisticated. You have knowledge and it needs to be shared and that's what going to bring about the shared solutions.

Having said that, I am hoping we meet again in about six months. I don't know what that will look like with the Legislative Agenda but I am hoping that you will consider attending that next meeting.

I am not certain where it will be or how we will pull that together; but we will meet again in the effort to

improve our relationships. And at that next meeting you will hold my feet to the fire and ask where is that MOU? Chief Carolyn will ask that. When did you meet with the federal minister? How did you do that? And I will have answers for you. I will, because I can commit to you that we will be working on this.

I wish you all a safe journey home. Thank you all for coming and for sharing this day.

Next Steps

1. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**
 - Facilitate a tripartite process that includes the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Indian and Northern Affairs and Alberta First Nations
2. **Cultural training**
 - Review training currently provided
 - Identify gaps and areas for improvement
 - Develop and implement a comprehensive and collaborative new cross cultural sensitivity training program
3. **Meaningful statistics/data**
 - Ministry staff, DFNAs, CFSAs and Representatives of other First Nations served by CFSAs to identify data required to determine program, services and resources that promote the best outcomes for children in care
 - Ministry staff, DFNAs, CFSAs and Representatives of other First Nations served by CFSAs to determine key performance indicators
4. **Deputy Minister, Children and Youth Services**, will meet with the CEOs of the DFNAs, CFSAs and Representatives of other First Nations served by CFSAs to develop strategies to promote collaboration and cooperation among DFNA and CFSAs service providers
5. **Continuation of the discussions**
 - The Minister of Children and Youth Services will meet with the DFNAs, CFSAs and Representatives of other First Nations served by CFSAs within six months

Evaluation Summary

Over 90% of participants indicated a high degree of satisfaction for what was accomplished at this inaugural gathering. Many said they were honoured to be at the meeting which they felt was organized in a manner that reflected the importance of the Aboriginal community to the Minister. Without exception, the comments of attendees were highly complimentary to the Minister and the Ministry. Participants appreciated the opportunity of meeting their colleagues, sharing information, and developing a better understanding of issues.

The positive and encouraging atmosphere of the meeting allowed participants to share openly and freely. Participants said the meeting, and the discussions in particular, were informative and helpful in creating greater understanding of issues. They did not feel one day was sufficient to discuss the many concerns they all share. The one overriding suggestion for improvement was to have a longer meeting time (some suggested two days) and allow free time for networking. The strong desire to have a follow-up gathering was clearly indicated in the comments provided by participants.

At the next meeting of the Chairs of DFNAs and Co-Chairs of CFSAs participants suggested the following topics could be included on the agenda.

1. Collaborative strategies (short term and long term)
 - i. Equity in funding
 - ii. Tripartite MOU
 - iii. Jordan's Principle
 - iv. First Nation's Child and Youth Advocate
 - v. Realistic, practical approaches to help mitigate the crisis of Aboriginal over representation in our system
 - vi. Stabilizing family life
2. Progress report from Ministry re commitments from last meeting
3. Statistics: number of Aboriginal children in care, ages, demographics, special needs, etc.
4. Cultural awareness: standards for Aboriginal vs. non-Aboriginal homes
 - i. Housing barrier to bringing children back home
 - ii. Limiting the amount of paper qualifications to become a licensed home.

Appendix 1 – Discussion Summaries: Working Together to Provide the Best Care for All Our Children

Bowen Room Discussion Group: Bert Auger and Mary Jane Graham, Facilitators

Group Members: Sharon Anderson, Chief James Ahnassay, Laura Auger, Valerie Beaver, Brian Boughton, Bill Clark, Tracy Czuy McKinnon, Karen Egge, Joanna Gladue, Chief Vern Janvier, Chief Rose Laboucan, Alphonse Ominayak, Judy Ostrowski, Ivan Sawan, Floyd Thompson

Summary compiled by Bert Auger and Mary Jane Graham

- Key is to keep Aboriginal children with Aboriginal families (there is no funding or formal structure to do this)
- Need more effort to have Aboriginal families or homes on Reserve for short or long term placement of Aboriginal children with community members
- There is a standard by which Aboriginal people are judged that isn't culturally appropriate (both in child intervention and education). Therefore, Aboriginal people will always fall short. This also results in more child intervention involvement with Aboriginal families that isn't there with non Aboriginal families.
- Racism in the system is still there; there is a definite need for education regarding Aboriginal culture and language. There needs to be more understanding.
- Hiring process impacted as the Ministry has not had appropriate people in place who understand the Aboriginal community culture.
- Federal government provided funding to build a group home on Reserve and then pulled the money. The Band went to the Province for funding which was denied as the Province doesn't fund "on Reserve" as it is a federal jurisdiction.
- First Nations left in middle between federal and provincial wrangling about jurisdiction – this needs to change.
- Maybe we need to look at bringing in a non profit agency to help keep kids on Reserve.
- We need to work with the families in our community and bring back positive parenting skills and practices. The government needs to work *with us* not *for us*.
- One example of Court not being helpful with a non-Aboriginal versus an Aboriginal couple. There was a bias shown to the mom a (non-Aboriginal female) with alcohol and drug issues and the children were impacted. Dad is clean and sober but court still sends kids with Mom. Aboriginal situation: Grandparents don't get access. Mom called Ministry and got help and access but that was because she is a Chief.
- Both Aboriginal males and females suffer in the court system.
- Problems are not just in the child intervention system. Need to take the bias out of government systems that interact with Aboriginal families and communities.
- How do we get to the place where we are beyond needing supports and children are kept in home and foster care and kinship homes not needed?
- Foster parents need to work with First Nations communities.
- Another example is of a child being returned home for two years and then previous foster parents get the court to pull the child from the First Nation community and return him to the previous foster parents. We need more work to keep an Aboriginal child connected to family and community.
- Foster parents may be able to use gifts to compete with natural family. The foster family and natural family shouldn't be competing. They should be working towards a common goal.
- Jurisdiction is a key component if government works *with us* not *for us*.
- Knowing community is knowing family.
- Driftpile requires adoptive parents to meet prior to adoption of any of their children.
- Follow up is crucial here for prevention and intervention but there is no follow up.
- Don't have family oriented facilities to allow the family to be involved.
- DFNA/CFSA working together is historical on both parts. Politics play a big role. CFSA's need to understand DFNA context; need to share practices with each other; need equality in how we are treated and DFNA folks need to be at the policy tables.
- Needs to be a clear, enforced, strong mandate for foster parents to maintain the family connection.
- In addition to permanency plan, one First Nation insists on a MOU with adoptive family regarding what is or will be provided - very successful.
- Need diplomacy skills to ensure we focus on child, not personalities.
- Training needed for CFSA Board and staff.
- CFSA needs to spend time listening, a skill not everyone possesses.
- Teach parents life skills to assist.
- In agreement with all said. CFSA Board wants to have relationship with Aboriginal leaders within the boundaries.
- Data and collection of data – Because numbers not increasing on Driftpile, that allows us to work with more families. If data not there, very hard to connect with children who are not on Reserve.
- When families working, less children in care.
- Need support of our leaders who must commit to keep our children at home.
- What's been done for our kids hasn't worked so we, the leaders, need to step in to do it.
- Need good quality education; need good health care; need good housing.

Brett Room Discussion Group: Yolanda Young Pine, Facilitator

Group Members: Audrey Breaker, Ron Gaida, Sharon Holtman, Gerrad Oishi, John Phillips, Kevin Provost, Heather Rann, Ken Serr, Marcel Weasel Head, Tammy Whitney, Tom Wickersham

Summary compiled by Yolanda Young Pine

How do CFSA better our services/ work with DFNAs?

- Need respect and understanding - where we are coming from (our history, our culture)
- Manager/frontline workers need to also come to the table. This is a start
- Bands not consulted. No consultation. We need to improve on this!
- Workers need to know who to call and know tribe's structure
- Improve relationship and communication
- We need to understand our roles and responsibilities
- Bring Regions/DFNAs together to discuss barriers/improvements
- Children need to be transitioned to the communities/families
- Protocols need to be developed between CFSAs and DFNAs
- We should be contacted and have input when Aboriginal children come into care
- Protocols put in place
- Get parents to care for their own
- We need to know how authorities determine where children are placed
- CFSA/DFNA governance level to meet regularly
- There is lack of communication, and relationships needs to improve
- Respect for First Nation people's way of life would occur if there was cultural training
- Consult with the DFNA and find out what they would like and where children should be placed
- It works both ways. DFNAs should try and work with CFSAs
- There shouldn't be any finger pointing
- Protocols need to be developed between CFSAs and DFNAs
- Some protocols already exist between regions and DFNA's. However need to be updated to meet everyone's need
- One DFNA Chair agency developed protocols almost 2 years ago and have not heard from the Province whether they were approved or not
- Where protocols do not exist, it is important they are developed. This will ensure that people are on the same page
- Band Designate consultation or "the lack of consultation" - when children are apprehended, the bands are not always contacted
- Workers may not know where and who to call
- First Nation children need to know where they come from; therefore should be brought back to the communities
- How are decisions made re placement of children
- CFSA chairs not aware that the CFSAs not consulting DFNAs and trying to work collaboratively
- Boards should meet on a monthly or quarterly basis, to keep each other up to date on issues and to come up with strategies
- Bring the DFNAs and CFSAs together to discuss barriers and how to improve the relationships
- Elder had shared her experience about what happens on her Reserve. She observed: "Children are having children and just throwing them away."
- In some DFNA Regions, efforts are made to work collaboratively with each other. Region 1 recently visited the Blood Reserve and toured their facility. This is a start and should continue
- DFNA Chair: As a council member of my Reserve we have a lot to deal with back home. We are dealing with the floods. But I was committed to attending this meeting to discuss the high number of Aboriginal Children in Care
- DFNA Chair: Due to circumstances beyond their control, some members are displaced and forced to move into the city. The Chief and Council would like to continue to service these families. However, there are jurisdictional issues. What can be done to change this?

Bulyea Room Discussion Group: Bruce Anderson, Facilitator

Group Members: Theresa Bull, Sandra Cardinal, Dick Frey, Audrey Franklin, Rose Lameman, Brian Lee, Lorne Morin, Cecilia Machatis

Summary compiled by Bruce Anderson

- Focus on providing help to families in their home before “intervention”. The best method of assisting families to change behaviour and learn new skills is to work with them side by side in the home. This is the traditional way of teaching - by example.
- Kinship homes need to be guided by community standards. Not every child in an Aboriginal home has to have own room, or even own bed. Large families are the norm. Materialism is not the equivalent of love, care and nurturing.
- Children being raised by Elders is part of ‘natural law’. In the old days, grandparents played a very large role in raising children.
- Jurisdictional barriers between “on Reserve” and “off Reserve” hinder keeping children with family and community. Just because a First Nations person/family leaves the Reserve does not mean they stop being First Nation, or that they are no longer part of or connected to the community.
- Active participation from actual First Nation communities in establishing policies and procedures for children. This is in reaction to the perception that in many cases when the Ministry seeks input and consultation, it is easier to access “urban Aboriginals”, many of whom have never lived on a First Nation Reserve.
- Allow First Nation agencies to develop Aboriginal/their own assessment tools. This is primarily in reference to the SAFE Assessment tool. This tool is viewed as very culturally inappropriate.
- Develop models and programs that provide resources to families starting where they are and assisting them through the healing and learning process, from the first step to the last.
- (Comment of Facilitator: The basic sense behind this part of the conversation was that given the multi-generational losses experienced by First Nation families, and the resulting morass their family systems are experiencing, short term interventions are inadequate to address the needs. It is critical that the Aboriginal communities develop the resources that will provide long term support and healing.)
- Provide resources to recruit Aboriginal front line workers.
- It is important for CFSAs to establish partnerships with First Nations/Aboriginal communities so that the First Nations/Aboriginal communities can provide mentorship, advice and expertise in working with Aboriginal families – on guiding, training and exposure to culture and participation.
- Lack of communication between authorities and lack of cultural awareness
 - Building this bridge and walking the walk is critical
 - Must be in constant and continual contact with the Aboriginal communities
 - A couple of days of “Aboriginal awareness” training is insufficient
- Province must advocate for First Nations/Aboriginal with the Federal Government for more dollars.
- CFSAs need to know the proper protocol when attempting to contact First Nations leadership, and when approaching elders in First Nations communities.

(Comment of facilitator: The conversation/discussion in this group was very free flowing. The focus really was on First Nation communities and identifying those barriers that the participants recognized in the current systems and models, and proposing broad solutions to address those barriers. The underlying feeling was that First Nation people/communities want the opportunity to develop a system based on their cultural values and traditions so they can help their families find healing.)

Egbert Room Discussion Group: Joey Hamelin, Facilitator

Group Members: Loïselle Arcand, Chief Carolyn Buffalo, Valerie Kaufman, Peter Miller, Sara Potts, Rolad Quinney, Myrna Rabbit, Darwin Soosay

Summary compiled by Joey Hamelin

Big Picture: kinship care, housing shortage, bringing children back home, safe house for youth on Reserve, receiving home on Reserve

What it means:

- The group talked about the impacts of socio-economic conditions and how these have a direct linkage with children and families. For example, overcrowded, substandard and limited housing on Reserve remains an ongoing challenge in the recruitment and retention of local caregivers.
- It is difficult to bring children and youth back home to a community with limited housing and gang violence.
- Often parents whose children come into care are experiencing intergenerational trauma (grief, loss, pain), poverty, inadequate housing coupled with addiction to alcohol, drugs (illicit & prescription misuse).
- One must recognize the big picture interconnections and impacts on First Nations' families as influenced by the ripple effects of history and the current environment.
- Youth Safe Home on Reserve: need to have a safe place (facility) for youth on the edges of joining or getting out of gangs.

- Receiving Home/Group Home on Reserve: need to have a receiving home on Reserve as a short-term and interim measure while finding placements on Reserve and supporting families to recovery. Another idea is to have a group home specific for those youth who are in placements off Reserve. This would serve as a transition back to the community. Success could be measured by bringing five (5) youth back home.

Caring for each other: extended families, spirituality, cultural connections, activities for young people, Elder involvement

What it means:

- It is common practice for extended family members to care for each other's children and it is also common practice for kinship care and custom adoption.
- Traditional child care should not be about money for foster caregivers or for our people. That is not the way it used to be. We need to help each other take care of children.
- Young people in care must be provided opportunities for genuine connections with family, extended family and to learn about their traditions, community, history and language as a means of belonging, health and wellness.
- Empowerment through spirituality: Young people need to have "hope" in their lives and someone to trust and feel free to talk with when they are feeling down or helpless in life.
- Empowerment through spirituality: Sharing our spiritual beliefs with our young people is important as they need to believe in the high power of our "Creator".

- We need to help young people to deal with grief, pain and loss through spirituality, cultural traditions, practices and ceremonies.
- Develop and implement after-school cultural and recreational activities for youth in the prevention of joining gangs.
- Suicide prevention is a sensitive topic that needs to be a priority for all of us as there are too many young people thinking about and acting on suicide.
- Include Elders in the development of policy, programs and services at all levels.
- Develop programs that focus on teaching parents how to parent – life skills, proper food and nutrition.
- Visibility of community members and organizing special events such as family BBQs as a way of bringing people together helps to build a strong community. Utilize the local radio station for positive messaging. Being visible in the community by taking walks sends a message that gang violence will not be tolerated.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC): invitation to the table, comparable funding, office space

What it means:

- INAC needs to be invited to the table in moving forward in addressing funding issues.
- INAC's funding formula needs to be challenged and request for the Minister to support First Nations in this debate is required.
- First Nations believe that INAC continues to practice provincial off-loading with respect to funding and jurisdiction.

- Many of the DFNAs operate from old buildings and have a shortage of office space. INAC should be supporting DFNAs in their struggle for new facilities with other federal departments.

Human rights complaint: Cindy Blackstock

What it means:

- The Ministry should invite Cindy Blackstock, First Nations Child Caring Society, to make a presentation to Ministry staff at the senior levels as it relates to Jordan's Principle, human rights complaint and other studies.
- The Ministry should sign on as a support to "I am a witness" (www.fnwitness.ca)

Jordan's Principle

What it means:

- The three parties need to be at the same table talking about "Jordan's Principle". It seems that both the Federal Government and Provincial Government share different perspectives on this matter. Having First Nations, Federal and Provincial Governments together can lead to a clear understanding and new perspective on Jordan's Principle.

Tripartite Table: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

What it means:

- Similar to Alberta Education's MOU, a Children's Services MOU with the Grand Chiefs and federal INAC Minister should be developed by the three parties as commitment to work together. This is not about money but it is about partnership and working together on a common agenda.

Off Reserve Service Delivery

What it means:

- First Nations should be delivering services to their members receiving child intervention services off Reserve and further discussion is required as to what this might look like that is a win-win and benefit for children and both parties.

Non-Aboriginal foster caregivers: cultural awareness, reallocation of resources, foster care policy

What it means:

- Non-Aboriginal foster caregivers need cultural training and awareness of First Nation traditions as a means of appreciating and understanding the background of the child they are caring for and to take the initiative of making those connections with the child.
- Concerted efforts of keeping children in their own community need to be a priority and the Ministry should consider a paradigm shift in the reallocation of funding to support local caregivers rather than paying for care off Reserve to non-Aboriginal foster caregivers.
- First Nations involvement is required in the development and revisions of foster care policy as there needs to be flexibility and interpretation of current policies. Further, foster caregivers need to be respectful of the child's community of origin and the importance of maintaining those connections. Foster caregivers do not "own" our children. Our children are a gift from the Creator and we need to honour this natural law.

Delegated First Nation Agency (DFNA) and Child & Family Services Authority (CFSA)

What it means:

Communication needs to be strengthened between both parties as it relates to member children being served by CFSA's. Further, there needs to be proper consultation with First Nations regarding member children at all levels of care.

Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) Model: made in Alberta / DFNA model

What it means:

- The Ministry's SAFE model purchased from the United States fails to accommodate the cultural needs of First Nations in Alberta. DFNA's have expressed the desire and need to develop a home assessment report model that can serve as an assessment tool that provides safety and protection as well as being culturally sensitive.
- SAFE is not a "good fit" and simply fails to adequately meet the recruitment needs of local caregivers. Some local caregivers screen themselves out since it is too lengthy and detailed a process and too much paperwork to complete.

Children with special needs / disabilities:

What it means:

- Children with special needs require access and availability of specialized services to them, regardless of residency.

More meetings with the Minister

What it means:

- As evidenced with the success of bringing us together to talk about First Nation children's issues, we need more meetings like this with the Minister. Agree with relationship building and these discussions.



Chief Rose Lameman, Chief James Ahnassay



Elder Jenny Cardinal, Hon. Dave Hancock, Audrey Breaker



Floyd Thompson, Sharon Holtman



Sharon Anderson, Chief Rose Lameman, Chief James Ahnassay



Back Row: Bruce Anderson, Hon. Yvonne Fritz, Bert Auger; Front Row: Mona Auger, Yolanda Young Pine, Florence Cardinal



TREATY NO. 7



TREATY NO. 6



TREATY NO. 8

Government
of Alberta
Canada

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
FOR FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION IN ALBERTA
(Hereinafter referred to as the "MOU")**

BETWEEN THE PARTIES:

CONFEDERACY OF TREATY 6 FIRST NATIONS
as represented by its duly elected Grand Chief

TREATY 7 MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
as represented by its duly elected Grand Chief

TREATY 8 FIRST NATIONS OF ALBERTA
as represented by its duly elected Grand Chief

(hereinafter called the "Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta")

AND:

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN RIGHT OF CANADA as
represented by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern
Development

(hereinafter called "Canada")

AND:

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN RIGHT OF ALBERTA as
represented by the Minister of Education and the Minister of
Aboriginal Relations

(hereinafter called "Alberta")

PREAMBLE

Whereas, the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights of First Nations people are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the Treaties are a fundamental part of the relationship between First Nations, Canada and Alberta;

Whereas, the Parties recognize the authority and autonomy of individual First Nations in Alberta;

Whereas, the Government of Alberta and the Chiefs of the First Nations in Alberta, in accordance with the *Protocol Agreement on Government to Government Relations* (May 2008), and the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework (2000) have committed to work on a government to government basis;

Whereas, the First Nations in Alberta believe the right to education is an inherent right granted by the Creator, reflects the original spirit and intent of the Treaties, and therefore supports the vision of "Indian Control of Indian Education" (1972);

Whereas, education is a life-long learning process that requires recognizing both the value of practical educational initiatives as well as the unique circumstances of the First Nations in Alberta, which include but are not limited to language and culture;

Whereas, the Parties believe in preserving, supporting and revitalizing the language, culture and identity of First Nation peoples;

Whereas, the Parties desire to improve the monitoring and reporting of outcomes to First Nation governments, communities, Alberta and Canada, and the accountability of First Nation and provincial education authorities for the education outcomes of all First Nation students in Alberta;

Whereas, First Nation students attending First Nation schools or provincial schools are not achieving educational outcomes or levels of success similar to all other students in Alberta;

Whereas, the Parties desire to improve the services and quality of education for all First Nation students attending both First Nation schools and provincial schools in order to improve educational outcomes while respecting their cultural identity; and

Whereas, the Parties agree to ever increase the knowledge of First Nation students by remedying barriers and creating strategic opportunities for First Nation learners to achieve or exceed the full educational outcomes, levels and successes of all other learners in Alberta.

THEREFORE:**PART I – Vision and Principles****1. Vision**

Canada, Alberta and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta hold a common vision for First Nations students in Alberta where First Nations students are achieving or exceeding the full educational outcomes, levels and successes of all other students in Alberta.

2. Principles

The Parties, as equal partners, intend that the MOU be interpreted and implemented in a manner that is consistent with the following principles:

- (a) Work collaboratively and expeditiously to continuously improve educational outcomes for First Nation students.
- (b) Recognize the diversity of First Nation peoples, communities, language, culture, traditions and spiritual practices and the need for standards-based and culturally-appropriate education.
- (c) Ensure First Nation students have equitable access to quality education and smooth transitions between First Nation and provincial schools.
- (d) Achieve comparable quality and standards between First Nation on-reserve and provincial education.
- (e) Enhance governance, policy, program and fiscal accountability to students, communities and funding agencies.
- (f) Empower and engage First Nation Elders, students, parents, and communities to improve educational outcomes.
- (g) Maximize effectiveness of existing activities and investments, and pursue initiatives to improve educational outcomes.
- (h) Promote building of institutional capacity and relationships.

Part II – Commitments**1. Treaty No. 6, Treaty No. 7 and Treaty No. 8 Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre (hereinafter called the "IKWC")**

- (1) To assist in fulfilling the Vision and Principles of the MOU, the Parties agree to support First Nations in Alberta in the establishment of an IKWC that is focused on improving the educational outcomes of First Nation students in a culturally appropriate and responsive education environment.
- (2) The Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta agrees to develop an IKWC work-plan to submit to the Alberta First Nations Education Circle described in Part III.
- (3) Canada will support First Nations in Alberta to develop a work plan for the Centre, make annual funding available for initial core operations, and make annual funding available for individual initiatives undertaken by the Centre.
- (4) Alberta will provide in-kind support and expertise to build capacity in the following areas:
 - a) data collection and management;
 - b) accountability and reporting;
 - c) system improvement; and
 - d) curriculum and resource development.

2. Education Improvement and Resourcing**(1) Resourcing and supports**

- a) Canada agrees to pursue additional agreed-upon targeted, strategic funding opportunities to increase the success of First Nation students in Alberta.
- b) Alberta agrees to pursue targeted, strategic funding opportunities designed to increase the success of First Nation students in Alberta and pursue opportunities to share knowledge and expertise with First Nations in Alberta.

- c) The Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta agrees to explore additional funding opportunities designed to increase the success of First Nation students in Alberta and explore opportunities to share knowledge and expertise with Alberta.

(2) Comparative education funding analysis

The Parties agree to continue work on a comparative analysis of federal funding for First Nation education (including Band-operated schools and provincial tuition) with provincial funding for education.

(3) Education programs and services analysis

- a) The Parties agree to do a review of existing education programs and services, including a catalogue of those related to employment and training.
- b) The Parties agree to do an analysis of program and service gaps that limit First Nation student success, including but not limited to an analysis of gaps between the First Nation education system and the provincial education system.
- c) The Parties agree to consider other promising practices.
- d) The Parties agree to identify opportunities for collaboration.

(4) Review of legislation & policies

- a) The Parties agree to review existing relevant legislation, policies and funding arrangements in order to identify barriers to First Nation student success including, but not limited to, those barriers which impede the smooth transition of First Nation students moving between First Nation and provincial education systems.
- b) The Parties agree to support First Nations in Alberta in the examination of the options for establishing an appropriate and effective legislative basis for First Nation education.

(5) Tuition/education service agreements

The Parties agree to continue work on addressing ongoing issues related to tuition or educational services agreements including, where appropriate, the implementation of new tuition or educational services agreements.

(6) Develop long term strategic action plan

The Parties agree to develop a long term strategic action plan for First Nation education in Alberta, based on the aforementioned reviews and analyses, which propose measures for the restructuring of First Nation education in Alberta in order to improve First Nation student outcomes.

3. Accountability and Performance Management

- (1) The Parties agree to develop processes necessary to maximize the successful implementation of existing programs, initiatives and resources.
- (2) The Parties agree to improve accountability and efficiency in the management of First Nations education funding.
- (3) The Parties agree to establish and implement a protocol concerning the collection, protection, ownership, use and disclosure of First Nation student information that:
 - a) provides capacity to use the information to measure and monitor educational outcomes for First Nation students;
 - b) assists in providing information for program enhancement and development; and
 - c) is consistent with federal and provincial information and privacy legislation including obtaining necessary parental consents.

4. Relationship Building

- (1) Alberta, in accordance with the *Protocol Agreement on Government to Government Relations (May 2008)*, agrees to engage provincial departments and facilitate relationships between the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta and provincial departments to identify and support opportunities to address issues that may affect or have an impact on the educational outcomes of First Nation students.
- (2) Canada agrees to engage other federal departments and facilitate their involvement in partnerships with provincial and First Nation parties, where their participation will contribute to improving First Nation student outcomes in Alberta.

- (3) The Parties agree to engage in strategic discussions, in the development or implementation of all initiatives, programs or other matters that affect the educational outcomes of First Nation students.
- (4) The Parties agree to actively encourage the development of collaborative frameworks between provincial school authorities and local First Nation communities.

5. First Nation Children in Care, Special Education, School Aged Children Not in School

- (1) The Parties agree to develop strategies to address the educational outcomes of the following:
 - a) First Nation children in care;
 - b) First Nation students with special education needs; and
 - c) school aged First Nation children not attending school or at risk of not attending school.
- (2) Further, the Parties agree to work with the necessary federal, provincial and First Nation agencies and professionals to enhance or develop culturally-appropriate, comprehensive and coordinated approaches that:
 - a) are school-based or school-linked;
 - b) maintain the culture, language and identity; and
 - c) improve educational outcomes for these First Nation children.

6. Parental and Community Engagement

The Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta agree to engage Canada and Alberta in the development of strategies to encourage and support the engagement of First Nation parents, Elders and communities to improve educational outcomes of First Nation students.

7. Recruitment, Retention, and Professional Development of Teachers

- (1) The Parties agree to develop strategies to improve the recruitment, retention and professional development of teachers in First Nation schools.
- (2) The Parties agree to develop strategies to increase the number of First Nation teachers in Alberta.
- (3) The Parties agree to develop strategies to improve the professional development for all teachers respecting the learning needs of First Nation students.
- (4) The Parties agree to explore partnerships with post-secondary or other institutions that contribute to preparing teachers.

B. Treaty and Cultural Awareness

The Parties agree to develop strategies to assist First Nation schools and provincial school authorities to increase the knowledge and awareness for all Alberta students and teachers of First Nations' histories including treaties, cultures, and traditions.

9. Holistic approach to education

The Parties agree to enhance or develop culturally-appropriate strategies to address land-based and experiential education, health and physical education, excellence in the arts and sports, extracurricular opportunities and to prepare the next generation of leaders and elders.

PART III – Alberta First Nations Education Circle

1. Establishment and Mandate

- (1) The Parties agree to establish an Alberta First Nations Education Circle (the "Circle") that will serve as a mechanism for ongoing partnership and be responsible for:
 - a) overseeing the implementation of the commitments set out in Part II of this MOU including the prioritization of commitments and the establishment of action plans, timelines, resource requirements and their source;
 - b) establishing its own rules of procedure including meeting dates, roles and responsibilities;

- c) celebrating successes;
- d) monitoring, evaluating and reporting outcomes annually; and
- e) any other responsibilities as determined by the Parties.

2. Membership

- (1) Membership on the Circle shall be comprised of the following:
 - a) Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta – Chief Executive Officer or Executive Director and the Education Directors of Treaty No. 6, Treaty No. 7 and Treaty No. 8.
 - b) Alberta – Deputy Minister of Education and Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Relations, as well as appropriate Assistant Deputy Ministers.
 - c) Canada – Assistant Deputy Minister and Regional Director General from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.
- (2) Membership may be expanded or modified as agreed upon by the Parties including, but not limited to, representation from the Treaty No. 6, 7 and 8 Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre, when appropriate.

3. Resourcing of the Circle

- (1) The Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta will provide the cultural and spiritual element, including the involvement of Elders, to the Circle.
- (2) Canada will support Treaty No. 6, Treaty No. 7 and Treaty No. 8 First Nations in their capacity to participate in the Circle.
- (3) Alberta will support the secretariat functions of the Circle.

PART IV – General Articles

1. Term

This agreement will be in effect upon execution and in force for 10 years unless terminated in writing by any Party upon 150 days notice or extended by the written agreement of the Parties.

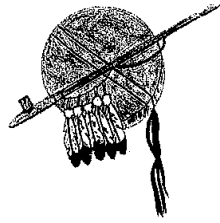
2. Annual Meeting

- (1) The Parties agree that the Grand Chiefs of Treaty No. 6, Treaty No. 7 and Treaty No. 8 and the Ministers of Indian and Northern Affairs, Alberta Education and Alberta Aboriginal Relations will meet annually to monitor progress of the MOU and give direction to the Circle.
- (2) The first meeting will be held within 6 months of signing this MOU.

3. Scope of MOU

- (1) None of the existing Treaty or Aboriginal rights, as recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* are derogated or abrogated by this MOU.
- (2) For greater certainty, this MOU is not a Treaty.
- (3) This MOU is not intended to define, create, recognize, deny or amend any rights or obligations of individual First Nations in Alberta.
- (4) This MOU is not intended to effect a transfer of responsibilities among the Parties.
- (5) This MOU is not intended to create legally enforceable obligations among the Parties or as between any two Parties herein.

The Parties, as represented by respective Grand Chiefs and Ministers, have signed this MOU.



NORTH PEACE TRIBAL COUNCIL

BEAVER - DENE THA' - LITTLE RED RIVER - LUBICON - TALLCREE

Briefing Note for Board Chair

Minister meeting

Purpose:

The purpose of this briefing note is to accept the invitation to the meeting with the Minister on June 17, 2010 and to relate challenges / issues that impact North Peace Tribal Council Child and Family Services delivery.

Current Situation:

North Peace Tribal Council Child and Family services have identified nine key areas' that would improve services delivery to family's nation member on and off reserve.

Background:

North Peace Tribal Council Delegated First Nation Agency has been delivering services to Children, Youth and Families to the eight First Nation communities; Chateh, Bushie River, Meander River, South Tallcree, North Tallcree, Beaver Ranch, Boyer River, Child's Lake since 1997.

The NPTC C&FS continually faces staff turn-over and limited funding for resources on the reserve, which can be linked to the high percentage of children and families being exposed to domestic violence in our communities. The NPTC C&FS have identified nine key challenges that impact service delivery on our First Nations.

Since the signing of the initial agreement the Dene Tha' has always recognized and supported a Nation Designate to ensure service provided on reserve meets legislative requirements to consult with the First Nations. In 2004 the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act legislated nation consultation requirements through the Nation Designate.

Challenges

1. First Nations do not have the funding necessary to ensure that cultural resources and awareness are promoted in community and regionally to service providers to improve communication and rapport.
2. The First Nations currently are responsible to ensure that a Nation Designate position is available to meet Provincial Legislation; the challenge is that for the First Nations this position is not funded so all expenses and legal costs are incurred by the Nation. The First Nations are not

made aware of children becoming involved until an order is granted, thus providing support and advocacy to nation members is delayed. The requirement for consent hinders the parents ability to ensure services from the First Nation should they not understand the meaning of involvement of the First Nation due to language barrier, culture shock (off reserve) etc. And, that consultation should be for both on and off reserve files at initial entry.

3. NPTC C&FS have Eight First Nations communities to administer the legislated requirements, the need for office space for services is lacking, it would be of benefit to First Nation members to have access in community for legislated services of C&F, and this would ensure that a Prevention focus vs. Intervention focus is promoted.
4. Training in the North is a challenge as staff has to go out of area to obtain training. NPTC would like to see more training in the north that is culturally sensitive, and focus on self-care and self-development.
5. Staffing challenges impact service delivery, NPTC C&FS would benefit from comparable staffing allotments as our Provincial counterparts; specialized units and positions. Recruitment and Incentives in the North need to be funded and supported by the Province.
6. Administering the Foster Care program/Kinship program on reserve has challenges due to language and cultural barriers and on reserve Governance requirements. Licensing for off reserve homes is a challenge due to CFSA's staff reviewing and editing DFNA's documentation. First Nation Governance - Council Resolutions (BCR) are being ignored by Provincial staff which has resulted in First Nations losing children through the Alberta Justice System.
7. Gaps in service delivery often stem from Provincial Legislated requirements that are not supported or funded by Federal Government. It is challenging to meet the requirements without the funding to ensure the same (comparable) service is provided to First Nations members.
8. On reserve members face the challenge receiving services from Provincial Programs due to program structure of it being reimbursable to families. This limits family's ability to receive services as they often have limited financial resources. And that, initiatives provided to FN communities often are limited in duration and funding thus, leaving families/members with no follow-through.
9. The number of Domestic Violence cases has been increasing not only for NPTC child and family services, but across Alberta. This issue needs to be addressed provincially with a focus on how service delivery on reserve will meet the needs of the Nations members and work towards a stronger community.

Next Steps:

- Funding for cultural resources to promote cultural awareness.
- Nation Designate need to be a funded position for each of the First Nations and that legislation reflects consultation with the nation at initial contact with family regardless of consent. First Nations need to be informed of Children in care from their Nation by notification of number and where children are.

- For cost efficiency, it would benefit First Nations to have secured facilities to deliver services. Funding and support from the Ministry would ensure that First Nation Child, Youth and Families are provided the best service delivery within the First Nation.
- Training for staff is made available in the North.
- Provincial support and funding to ensure that DFNA's services model for workloads, recruitment and retention of staff is comparable to the Provincial CFSA's delivery models.
- Kinship homes to be funded equally to general homes and that Licensing for off reserve homes are approved by the DFNA opening/supporting the facility. Licensing requirements should reflect the First Nations Governance input and requirements. All BCRs signed by Chief and Council need to be acknowledged and recognized by Provincial workers.
- Funding and support for ongoing comparable service delivery needs to be addressed between the Provincial and Federal levels of Government.
- Province to support First Nations in ensuring that the Jordan's Principle is recognized in Alberta. Also, initiatives administered on reserve are funded appropriately to ensure that proper follow-through is completed for nation members.
- Work together with First Nations to develop a strong service delivery strategy that will focus on development of a model to promote a healthy family approach to community and the members facing this challenge.

Sincerely,



Chief, James Ahnassay

A/Board Chair- North Peace Tribal Council

Appendix 4 – Biographies

John Mould, Child and Youth Advocate

John Mould, MSW, RSW is currently the Child and Youth Advocate (Alberta). He was appointed October 1, 2002. He has been with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate since its inception September 1, 1989.

John began work with the Alberta Government as a child welfare worker in September 1968. Since that time has had a number of positions with what is now the Children and Youth Services Ministry, almost all of which have been child welfare related.

John graduated from the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary, with an MSW in 1975. He is currently President of the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates.

John has been active with social work organizations at provincial, national and international levels. He was President of the Alberta Association of Social Workers (now the Alberta College of Social Workers) for two years in the early 1980's; was President of the Canadian Association of Social Workers from 1997 to 2001; and was the North American Vice-President of the International Federation of Social Workers from 1999 to 2001.

John has been on the local (Edmonton), provincial (Alberta) and national boards of the John Howard Society.

Between 1975 and 2000 he has had numerous appointments as a sessional instructor with the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary.

From 1987 to 1992, John was an Associate with Wurmman, Egan and Associates, a private community-based treatment agency assisting children and families affected by child sexual abuse.

Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education

Dave Hancock is in his fourth term as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Edmonton-Whitemud. On March 12, 2008, he was appointed Minister of Education and Government House Leader.

In addition, Dave currently serves as the Deputy Chair of the Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee, Vice-Chair of the Cabinet Policy Committee on Community Services and is a member of the Agenda and Priorities Committee and Treasury Board.

In his third term, Dave served as Minister of Health and Wellness and as Government House Leader. He was also appointed as a member of the Agenda and Priorities Committee, Treasury Board, the Legislative Review Committee, the Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee, and the Cabinet Policy Committee on Community Services.

He has previously served as the Minister of Advanced Education, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, and Vice-Chair of the Standing Policy Committee on Education and Employment. During each of his terms in office, Dave has served as a member of Treasury Board and the Agenda and Priorities Committee.

Dave is a lawyer by profession and was a partner with Matheson and Company, Barristers and Solicitors, before entering public service. He received an arts degree in political science and economics, and a law degree from the University of Alberta.

He is a strong believer in giving back to the community. He supports numerous non-profit and service organizations as time permits, including Success By 6, Meals on Wheels, and Kiwanis Club.

Dave was born in Fort Resolution, N.W.T. He lived in Hazelton, B.C., and the northern Alberta community of Fort Vermillion, graduating from La Crête Public School before moving to Edmonton to attend university.

He and his wife, Janet, have three children: Ian, Janis and Janine.

Appendix 5 – Attendees

Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister of Children and Youth Services

Speakers

John Mould, Child and Youth Advocate

Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education

Delegated First Nation Agency Representatives

Chief James Ahnassay, Chair, North Peace Tribal Council Child and Family Services

Laura Auger, Chair, Little Red River Cree Nation Child and Family Services Society

Audrey Breaker, Chair, Siksika Family Services Corporation

Theresa Bull, Chair, Akamkispatinaw Ohpikihawasowin Child and Family Services

Sandra Cardinal, Chairperson, Saddle Lake Wah-Koh-To-Win Child Care Society

Joanna Gladue, Chair, Western Cree Tribal Council Child Youth and Family Enhancement

Chief Vern Janvier, Chair, Athabasca Tribal Council Child and Family Services

Chief Rose Laboucan, Chair, Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council
Child and Family Services

Roland Quinney, Chair, Tribal Chief Child and Family Services (East)

Lorne Morin, Chairperson, Yellowhead Tribal Services Agency

Kevin Provost, Board Member, Piikani Child and Family Services

Ivan Sawan, Treasurer, Kee Tas Kee Now Child and Family Services

Darwin Soosay, President, Kasohkewew Child Wellness Society

Marcel Weasel Head, Chair, Blood Tribe Child Protection Services

Tammy Whitney, Chairperson, Tsuu T'ina Child and Family Services

First Nation Representatives

Loiselle Arcand, First Nations Delegate, Alexander First Nation
 Brian Lee, Councillor, Ermineskin Cree Nation
 Cecilia Machatis, First Nations Delegate, Cold Lake First Nations
 Myrna Rabbit, Councillor, Paul First Nation

Chiefs

Chief Carolyn Buffalo, Montana First Nation
 Chief Allan Paul, Alexander First Nation

Elders

Elder Jenny Cardinal, Treaty 6, Saddle Lake First Nation
 Elder Mary Kappo, Treaty 8, Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation

Child and Family Services Authorities Representatives

Sharon Anderson, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Métis Settlements
 Brian Broughton, Co-Chair, North Central Alberta
 Bill Clark, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Northeast Alberta
 Tracy Czuy McKinnon, Acting Co-Chair, Northeast Alberta
 Karen Egge, Co-Chair, Northwest Alberta
 Audrey Franklin, Aboriginal Co-Chair, North Central Alberta
 Dick Frey, Co-Chair, Edmonton and Area
 Ron Gaida, Co-Chair, Central Alberta
 Sharon Holtman, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Southwest Alberta
 Valerie Kaufman, Board Member, Edmonton and Area
 Rose Lameman, Aboriginal Co-Chair, East Central Alberta
 Peter Miller, Co-Chair, East Central Alberta
 Gerrad Oishi, Co-Chair, Calgary and Area
 Judy Ostrowski, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Northwest Alberta
 John Phillips, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Calgary and Area
 Sara Potts, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Central Alberta
 Heather Rann, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Southeast Alberta
 Ken Serr, Co-Chair, Southeast Alberta
 Floyd Thompson, Aboriginal Co-Chair, Métis Settlements
 Tom Wickersham, Co-Chair, Southwest Alberta

Facilitators

Bruce Anderson, Aboriginal Initiatives
 Bert Auger, Aboriginal Initiatives
 Joey Hamelin, Aboriginal Initiatives
 Yolanda Young Pine, Aboriginal Initiatives
 Mary Jane Graham, Governance Services

Appendix 6 – Planning Committee

Gord Johnston, Acting Deputy Minister, Children and Youth Services

Fred Anderson, Aboriginal Initiatives

Audrey Breaker, Chair, Siksika Nation Family Services Corporation

Theresa Bull, Chair, Akamkispitinaw Ohpikihawasowin
Child and Family Services

Betty Forster, Deputy Minister's Office

Joanna Gladue, Chair, Western Cree Tribal Council
Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Agency

Mary Jane Graham, Governance Services

Gerrad Oishi, Co-Chair, Calgary and Area
Child and Family Services Authorities

Judy Ostrowski, Co-Chair, Northwest Alberta
Child and Family Services Authorities

Sara Potts, Co-Chair, Central Alberta
Child and Family Services Authorities

Jennifer Yip Choy, Event Coordinator

DELEGATED FIRST NATION AGENCIES AND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AUTHORITIES

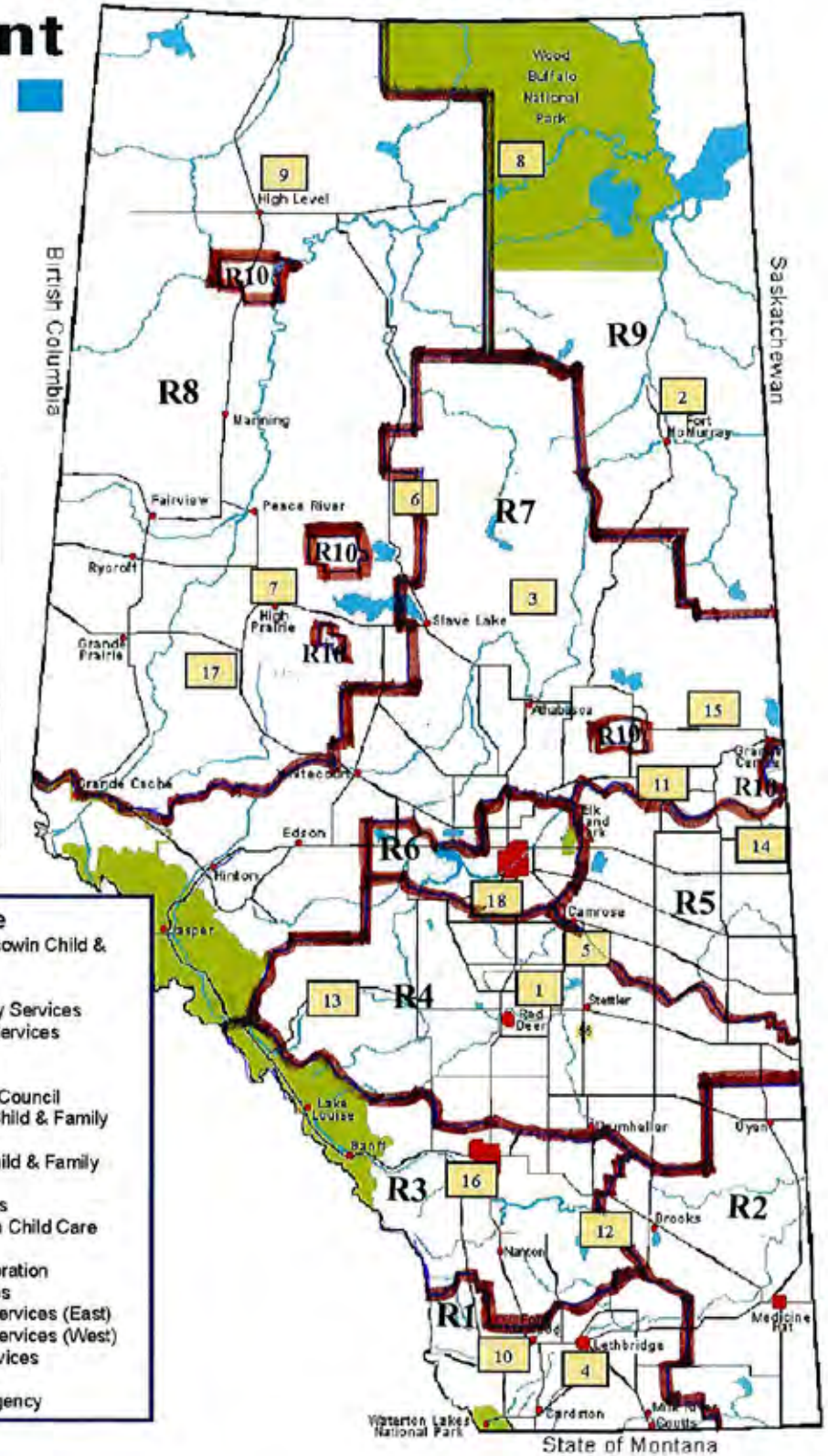
Government
of Alberta

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. Akamkispitinaw 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



DFNA Map.doc

January 2010

Alberta