



The Alberta Children Services Ombudsman Office

Date: September 23, 2016

**Comments and Suggestions Indigenous Children in Care
Of the Alberta Children Services.**

Alberta Children's Advocate Ombudsman:

As an Indigenous person I would like to state my opinion on this matter as it pertains to Aboriginal children. Some of my family members were in care. I am speaking with honesty as well as a concerned Albertan. In these comments you will find.

1. My personal Account of the Alberta Social Workers.
2. Former Community Advocate Comments
3. Cindy Blackstock Children's Advocate News article.(retrieved from the Internet website)

Thank you for allowing people of Alberta has their say to you. There will be deaths with the Aboriginal children that are in care. There are reports; the Alberta government social worker's do not pay enough attention to the Indigenous children as much as they do with other groups. These children in care have been failed by their care-givers. The Alberta children service also has failed these children.

The Children's Services merely place these children where ever is convenient for the Social worker. We know the challenges; there are not that many foster homes available. There are challenges because some children do have ADD, ADHD and FASD. Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyper Disorder and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder.

The suggestions to the Alberta Children's services are as follows

- There is a need to implement managers that understand Indigenous culture. The Manager should also be an Indigenous person. My biggest dissatisfaction is the middle management. All of the policies and procedures that are in place do not mean anything because the management will not move forward with some things.
- This manager ought to have the education and background to understand there is a difference to working with the Indigenous population as to the larger society.
- My comments also the Alberta government should appoint a Co-Chair who is an Indigenous person with Child welfare service experience. To the Children's Advocate, Ombudsman's office. We all know the reports about the deaths of the Indigenous children in foster care. Please listen to the general public for this consultation effort.

The following are comments made by Indigenous Community Advocate.

“Most Aboriginal children that come in Children’s service care. These children do not have a choice where to live and what is happening to them. It is always the social worker’s decision. I believe the children should be placed in homes of people they are most familiar with. Most of these children are in the state of shock when they are apprehended and placed in Caucasian foster homes. From this point on children are brain washed by the social worker. One might think that all foster homes are equal however they are not. Some homes are okay some are not. Foster parents are doing this foster care for the money not for the love of these children! Aboriginal children are trained and brain washed to live like Caucasian people

The Children in care are given negative information about their parents. Their parents are not good care givers. They are not taught the Native culture or the Indigenous spirituality. It is this type of foster home where these children end up dying. The reports that indicate the children in care are abused, sexually, physically, emotional verbally and psychologically”

My Personal background experience with the Alberta Children’s Services:

Here is a background about your typical social worker visiting an Alberta Métis settlement. My parents were family care givers that fostered their own grandchildren at this Metis Settlement. The Alberta social workers would come around to our house quite often. The social workers would also visit other households in the community and get all of the gossip about other families. (Lateral Violence).

We were building a house for this elderly couple next to their old house at this Métis community in Northern Alberta.

Social workers would often come to that particular house and stay there for a half a day. However when this same social worker stops at my parents place they would just be in a rush because the social worker heard all the gossip about my parents and they would accept that gossip as fact! My parents were always accused or blamed of something because of hearsay.

Comment from an active Indigenous Social Worker

An Indigenous Alberta social worker said that she would never advance in her career right now. Currently she is a supervisor in central Northern Alberta office. She is very articulate individual but, again that colonialism, control comes into play. Therefore she will be held back and she will not advance for whatever reason. The Ombudsman office should promote advancing Indigenous Social Workers to play a bigger role in management!

There is a dark history with Indigenous Families and their children in Canada.

The colonists in the 1800's removed most or all of the Indigenous children from their parents and care givers. They were placed in a residential school setting where they were molested and abused. This very same thing is happening today, but with foster homes! www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools. These children were molested by the colonists / predators/ pedophiles.

The time has come to make a huge change stop the deaths of these Indigenous children!

Cindy Blackstock, Canada's 'relentless moral voice' for First Nations equality

[Tavia Grant](#)

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Nine years, thousands of documents and millions of dollars later, Cindy Blackstock is still shocked she had to bring the case forward in the first place.

Behind all the legal wrangling lay a simple principle: that First Nations children deserve the same treatment as anyone else in Canada. The case, which the federal government spent more than \$5-million fighting, resulted in a landmark ruling in January that the government discriminated against First Nations kids on reserves by underfunding social services.

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling was a victory affecting the lives of 163,000 children, one that garnered national attention. Yet half a year later, Dr. Blackstock is visibly frustrated by what she sees as an inadequate response from the government to address urgent funding inequities for kids.

“It doesn't matter how many announcements they make or how many smiles they give ... we should all be accountable for what's actually happening to these children on the ground level” – and by that measure, “conditions really haven't changed,” says Dr. Blackstock, executive director of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada.

So, she continues to nudge. Last week, the federal government filed an update on its actions and announced up to \$382-million in new funding to improve access to services. But Dr. Blackstock says she still has “significant concerns” over the government's compliance with the ruling, among them when the funding will start and how it will be allocated. She's now considering further legal action – including a contempt order – if it doesn't move faster.

She continues to criss-cross the country to speak publicly, impatient at the slow pace of change. In the process, the driving force behind the case has been called a hero, a champion of children, and a “rock star social worker.” NDP indigenous affairs critic Charlie Angus calls her the greatest civil rights heroine in the country. “She is Canada's Martin Luther King at this moment for indigenous children – a relentless moral voice holding government to account.”

Her work in advocating for kids and their rights to equal access to services “has advanced the cause immeasurably,” said Paul Martin, former prime minister, who counts himself as a “huge supporter.”

“I believe Cindy Blackstock represents so much of what’s good about Canada,” he said. “The fact that she took on the Harper government on a very simple point and that is that First Nations children are entitled to the same level of care as any other child in the country – I don’t think there’s a Canadian who’d deny that ... And yet it took Cindy years in fighting the government in front of the human rights tribunal to finally make her case.”

Ask her about the hero label and she grows uncomfortable. Her standard of success, she says, is whether kids’ lives are actually improving. By that measure, she’s disappointed. So she carries on. Her hope, she says, is to see Canada celebrate its 150th birthday next year as a country free from racial discrimination.

Like screaming into silence

Dr. Blackstock grew up all over northern B.C., the daughter of a forester who moved with the seasons.

As a little girl, she recalls black-and-white images on TV – the horrors of the Ku Klux Klan and flashes of the American civil-rights movement – and how non-aboriginal Canadians looked south to the U.S. and said, thank god we’re not like them.

“And yet for me, there was the Indian Act, there were these reserves, expectations that we were worth less than everybody else, we were the ‘takers’ of society – and there was no awareness of the other side of this reality. It was almost like we were screaming into silence,” says Dr. Blackstock, 51, a member of the Gitksan First Nation. “That injustice and that refusal to accept it was something that would just be a trajectory throughout my life.”

That trajectory includes four degrees, including a PhD in social work from the University of Toronto, as well as four honorary degrees, and 49 awards and honours.

After earning her first degree, she worked as a social worker in B.C. for more than a decade, an experience that showed her how flawed the system was: Most of the children being taken by child and family services were indigenous, and many who were removed wound up worse off than where they’d come from.

So, she decided to change that. Not by going after an agency or two. She took on the whole system.

“What I saw were children being systemically removed from these communities. And I’d go to these communities, and there was no running water, and people would wonder why the kids weren’t clean, and I’d think maybe someone should do something about the water. We would see the multigenerational impacts of residential schools, and there are no mental-health services that are culturally appropriate. So there were all these layers of inequality and I started to realize it was the system, in many cases, that was creating conditions where families were not going to be successful in caring for their kids. And nobody was really holding the system to account.”

This inequality has had a direct impact on social and economic outcomes. Indigenous children are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as other kids in Canada. Suicide rates are up to seven times higher than among non-aboriginal youth. Life expectancies are lower. There are more than 100 boil-water advisories on reserves across Canada. Housing conditions remain substandard.

In 2007, the Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations filed their complaint. In the process, federal funding to her organization was cut. She felt “violated” to learn the federal government was spying on her personal life, including monitoring her Facebook page, a finding backed by Canada’s privacy commissioner. She was also barred from a key meeting by a government official – a move the human rights tribunal ruled was retaliation, and was awarded \$20,000, which she donated to children’s charities.