
Provincial Child and Family Well Being Strategy

ADDRESSING THE MISSING MURDERED WOMEN AND
GIRLS CALLS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario
AUTHORED BY THE ANCFSAO MMIWG COMMITTEE | 2021-2022

Contents

Background 2

MMIWG..... 2

About ANCFSAO 3

MMIWG Calls for Social Workers and Those Implicated in Child Welfare: 3

Summary of ANCFSAO MMIWG Strategy and Work Plan..... 5

Background

Findings recorded in the National Inquiry's Final Report into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) confirm that deliberate and consistent human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses are the root cause behind Canada's staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ community¹. In addition to many other forms of violence and discriminatory practices, the report brings to light strong correlation between the ongoing child welfare policies First Nations women are subjected to, and the grim outcomes which led to the trends and the launch of the inquiry.

Noting the lack of our systems' political will to alter status quo within social services, and therefore the continued diminishing of Indigenous culture, values and parenting practices and lack of culturally response and appropriate practices, in favour of non-Indigenous models and Euro-Western supports and services, all leading to increased trauma, and ultimately child apprehensions, disconnect from culture and communities, and ultimately resulting in increased vulnerabilities of Indigenous women and girls to violence and deaths.

As a result of its findings, the Inquiry offered 231 concrete, individual Calls for Justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries and all Canadians. This included fifteen Calls for Justice targeted specifically for those implicated in the Child Welfare sector.

MMIWG

Working collaboratively with its membership of Indigenous Child Wellbeing Agencies, ANCFSAO has been at the forefront in advocating at all government levels to ensure our Indigenous families, children and youth can mend from the historical traumas and thrive within their own culturally enriched communities.

Following the release of the National Inquiry's Final Report on MMIWG, ANCFSAO conducted a comprehensive review and held a series of training sessions on the Final Report for our senior leadership, including Executive Directors and Directors of Services of the Indigenous Well-Being Agencies. Following collaborative discussions and engagement, ANCFSAO compiled the gathered information to formulate a Strategy to address the MMIWG Calls to Justice.

The Strategy focuses on three key identified objectives, stemming from the Inquiry's ***MMIWG Calls for Justice: Calls for Social Workers and those Implicated in Child Welfare***:

∞ **Reduce the use of residential placements and the cycles of trauma** ∞

∞ **Reinforce the need for services that are empowering and strengthening our women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ community** ∞

∞ **To research best practises and implement intensive ongoing training for all implicated in child welfare** ∞

ANCFSAO included an additional all-encompassing, action point in our Strategy, focused on the best interest of the child and committing to

¹ Please note this document's use of, and intent of the acronym **2SLGBTQIA+** is to represent the community directly represented via the letters as well as those who may use terms not included in this acronym and are represented via the + sign.

About ANCFSAO

ANCFSAO is an association of Indigenous Child and Family Well Being Agencies mandated to build a better life for all Indigenous children, families and communities through promoting the delivery of culturally based services.

ANCFSAO acts as a resource in assisting its member agencies towards the provision of high-quality, community-based child welfare and family well-being services to Indigenous people through education and training, policy development and analyses, and research and advocacy.

In total, ANCFSAO's members serve 90 percent of all First Nations communities in Ontario. We are deeply honoured to serve our member agencies and to provide the reach, coverage, and service delivery we do as a result of our valuable relationship with them.

MMIWG Calls for Social Workers and Those Implicated in Child Welfare:

12.1 We call upon all federal, provincial, and territorial governments to recognize Indigenous self-determination and inherent jurisdiction over child welfare. Indigenous governments and leaders have a positive obligation to assert jurisdiction in this area. We further assert that it is the responsibility of Indigenous governments to take a role in intervening, advocating, and supporting their members impacted by the child welfare system, even when not exercising jurisdiction to provide services through Indigenous agencies.

12.2 We call upon on all governments, including Indigenous governments, to transform current child welfare systems fundamentally so that Indigenous communities have control over the design and delivery of services for their families and children. These services must be adequately funded and resourced to ensure better support for families and communities to keep children in their family homes.

12.3 We call upon all governments and Indigenous organizations to develop and apply a definition of “best interests of the child” based on distinct Indigenous perspectives, world views, needs, and priorities, including the perspective of Indigenous children and youth. The primary focus and objective of all child and family services agencies must be upholding and protecting the rights of the child through ensuring the health and well-being of children, their families, and communities, and family unification and reunification.

12.4 We call upon all governments to prohibit the apprehension of children on the basis of poverty and cultural bias. All governments must resolve issues of poverty, inadequate and substandard housing, and lack of financial support for families, and increase food security to ensure that Indigenous families can succeed.

12.5 We call upon all levels of government for financial supports and resources to be provided so that family or community members of children of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people are capable of caring for the children left behind. Further, all governments must ensure the availability and accessibility of specialized care, such as grief, loss, trauma, and other required services, for children left behind who are in care due to the murder or disappearance of their caregiver.

12.6 We call upon all governments and child welfare services to ensure that, in cases where apprehension is not avoidable, child welfare services prioritize and ensure that a family member or members, or a close community member, assumes care of Indigenous children. The caregivers should be eligible for financial supports equal to an amount that might otherwise be paid to a foster family and will not have other government financial support or benefits removed or reduced by virtue of receiving additional financial supports for the purpose of caring for the child. This is particularly the case for children who lose their mothers to violence or to institutionalization and are left behind, needing family and belonging to heal.

12.7 We call upon all governments to ensure the availability and accessibility of distinctions based and culturally safe culture and language programs for Indigenous children in the care of child welfare.

12.8 We call upon provincial and territorial governments and child welfare services for an immediate end to the practice of targeting and apprehending infants (hospital alerts or birth alerts) from Indigenous mothers right after they give birth.

12.9 We call for the establishment of a Child and Youth Advocate in each jurisdiction with a specialized unit with the mandate of Indigenous children and youth. These units must be established within a period of one year of this report. We call upon the federal government to establish a National Child and Youth Commissioner who would also serve as a special measure to strengthen the framework of accountability for the rights of Indigenous children in Canada. This commissioner would act as a national counterpart to the child advocate offices that exist in nearly all provinces and territories.

12.10 We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to immediately adopt the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal 2017 CHRT 14 standards regarding the implementation of Jordan’s Principle in relation to all First Nations (Status and non-Status), Métis, and Inuit children. We call on governments to modify funding formulas for the provision of services on a needs basis, and to prioritize family support, reunification, and prevention of harms. Funding levels must represent the principle of substantive equity.

12.11 We call upon all levels of government and child welfare services for a reform of laws and obligations with respect to youth “aging out” of the system, including ensuring a complete network of support from childhood into adulthood, based on capacity and needs, which includes opportunities for education, housing, and related supports. This includes the provision of free post-secondary education for all children in care in Canada.

12.12 We call upon all child and family services agencies to engage in recruitment efforts to hire and promote Indigenous staff, as well as to promote the intensive and ongoing training of social workers and child welfare staff in the following areas:

- history of the child welfare system in the oppression and genocide of Indigenous Peoples
- anti-racism and anti-bias training
- local culture and language training
- sexual exploitation and trafficking training to recognize signs and develop specialized responses

12.13 We call upon all governments and child welfare agencies to fully implement the Spirit Bear Plan.

12.14 We call upon all child welfare agencies to establish more rigorous requirements for safety, harm-prevention, and needs-based services within group or care homes, as well as within foster situations, to prevent the recruitment of children in care into the sex industry. We also insist that governments provide appropriate care and services, over the long term, for children who have been exploited or trafficked while in care.

12.15 We call upon child welfare agencies and all governments to fully investigate deaths of Indigenous youth in care.

Summary of ANCFSAO MMIWG Strategy and Work Plan

To address the National Inquiry's fifteen Calls for Justice, ANCFSAO's four identified priority areas of work and achieve the stated strategic objectives, over the last couple of years ANCFSAO began the design and implementation of various initiatives, as well as planning for additional projects under its MMIWG Workplan.

Concurrently, ANCFSAO has been conducting continuous work around advocacy to the provincial and federal governments, as well as provincial entities involved in child welfare, including providing analysis and recommendations of legislative and regulatory amendments, collaborating with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services on the ongoing work on Child Welfare Modernization and Reform, as well as additional participation on various standing sector and provincial committees conducting work that is relevant to MMIWG, 2SLGBTQIA+ community and child and family wellbeing as a whole.

In order to address the overall impacts of child welfare on girls and women within the MMIWG context, reduce and eliminate risks posed by culturally incongruent practices such as lack of culturally responsive supports, apprehension and removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities, ANCFSAO has been working with the Ontario government in addressing the need for critical alignment with the federal legislation – *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, which received royal assent in June, 2019 – to affirm and transfer authority and autonomy of child welfare of Indigenous children to Indigenous nations and communities, and their respective Indigenous agencies. (Call for Justice 12.2 and a recommendation proposed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report 2015).

ANCFSAO continues to work in close consultation with the Paediatric Death Review Committee (PDRC) addressing Call for Justice 12.15 to investigate deaths of Indigenous children/youth in care, to advocate for enhanced processes and accountability frameworks.

Additionally, ANCFSAO, in response to the various recommendations of the National Inquiry (including Calls for Justice 12.2; 12.3; 12.4; 12.5; etc.), is continuing its advocacy and work with regards to the need for a targeted funding model to ensure needs-based funding allocation for rural, remote and northern communities to attain access for appropriate supports and services for Indigenous children, youth, women and families.

To date, ANCFSAO has completed and deployed a variety of specialized trainings, including:

- Becoming an Ally
- Heart and Spirit
- Indigenous Worker Authorization
- How to engage with expectant young Indigenous mothers (Pre- and Post-Natal Care)
- Youth In Transition



To **reduce the use of residential placements and the cycles of trauma**, as advocated for by Calls for Justice 12.5 and 12.14, ANCFSAO has committed to the following:

- Develop, deploy and promote ANCFSAO trainings that are trauma informed, strengthening, family focused and enriched in our Indigenous worldview.
- Research and develop Indigenous specific performance and prevention indicators that will provide evidence-based service delivery.

- Enable measurement of effectivity of developed and implemented tools on targeted demographics, including the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- Develop and deploy Indigenous Child and Family Wellbeing Tools to replace Ontario Child Protection tools.
 - To include wholistic child and family wellbeing assessment.
- Develop and implement training and awareness materials addressing the Cycles of Violence and Trauma and Ways for Healing in Indigenous Men and Boys.
- Advocate for funding to increase the availability of necessary supports and services, particularly those that are Indigenous led, trauma focused and providing wholistic healing across all areas of need such as mental health and addictions, cycles of violence and other traumas.
- Advocate with the government(s) on the use of customary care in place of residential placements and apprehensions.

Additionally, ANCFSAO, together with its membership is continuing to lead the work on the development of an Indigenous Information System, to ensure safe and accurate recording and analysis of identity and data for measurements of outcomes.



To **reinforce the need for services that are empowering and strengthening our women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ community**, as advocated for by Calls for Justice 12.5 and 12.8, 12.11, 12.14, ANCFSAO has committed to the following:

- Promote specialized training that focuses on Indigenous youth and 2SLGBTQIA+ community and youth who are aging out, expecting and preventing entry into the human/sex trafficking industry.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Community Training and Service Guide for servicing girls and youth ages 12-18 that is evidence based and culturally grounded in best practices as well as training and education for parents and caregivers.
 - Conduct engagement with Elders and communities and promote awareness and educate on 2SLGBTQIA+ community, historical consequences of discriminatory colonial practices leading to targeted genocide of 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- Advocate for mandatory Indigenous training of all group and care homes licensees and service providers as well as continue recommendations to the Ministry for the need to implement Indigenous training for non-Indigenous care providers and homes to ensure Indigenous girls in the care of mainstream CAS receive culturally appropriate supports and prevention services.



To **research best practices and implement intensive ongoing training to all child welfare workers**, as advocated for by Calls for Justice 12.12, ANCFSAO has committed to the following:

- To develop and implement new trainings, and/or expand on existing trainings for our member agencies and non-member agencies that are trauma informed and enriched in Indigenous worldview, including:
 - Becoming an Ally
 - Heart and Spirit
 - Indigenous Pathways to Authorization
 - How to Engage with Expectant Indigenous Mothers (Pre- and Post-Natal Care)
 - Youth in Transition, Preparing Youth for Independence
 - First Nations/Indigenous Service Model
 - Prevention Series Training
 - Crisis Response Training
 - Duty to Respond (Report)
 - First Encounter Training
 - Customary Care Training
 - Eliminating Violence and Trauma Cycles in Young and Adolescent Boys and Men

- To deploy assessment and evaluation framework for deployed trainings to measure progress and track completion rates and ensure trainings are effective in meeting the desired outcomes.



To meet its objective to **develop a more effective way for finding missing Indigenous children and youth**, ANCFSAO is examining options to create a tool for tracking and amplifying alerts for locating and returning missing Indigenous children and youth.