



Unit 100 - 346 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba CANADA R3C 0C3
(204) 988-7440 • 1-800-263-7146 • Fax: (204) 988-7472
www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca

MEDIA RELEASE

June 15, 2016

RE: ON THE EDGE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: COMMUNITY NARRATIVES ON THE VULNERABILITY OF MARGINALIZED INDIGENOUS GIRLS

Reconciliation is not a destination, but a winding road on which we are all invited to walk, and each of us has an important role to play in healing our shared and difficult history, according to a narrative report released today by the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA). In Manitoba, as in the rest of the country, citizens are embracing an era of community building and a time of righting the historical injustices that have been experienced by Canada's First Peoples. The years of racist and gendered violence that has been allowed to fester and grow in our communities shows its terrible face in the numbers of girls who are targeted and exploited. And despite the historical injustices, Indigenous girls on the edge of womanhood continue to thrive and to be the primary influencers of the developing generations.

"We know that there is deep knowledge and expertise in the community, in the adults who surround and support Indigenous youth every day," explained Darlene MacDonald, Manitoba's Children's Advocate. "So, we invited eleven leaders from the local Indigenous community to tell us, in their own words, what needs to happen in our public systems to better meet the needs of all youth, but especially the needs of Indigenous girls."

The Office of the Children's Advocate worked alongside respected Indigenous scholar, Dr. Marlyn Bennett, to gather the stories and the lessons from the community and to weave them together to create a tapestry of community narratives. The report out today is unique in many ways and highlights voices that are too often dismissed by mainstream public care systems. At times their words are empowering and gentle and at times they roil with understandable anger and passion.

Emerging from the community wisdom and from hearing every day the stories Indigenous youth tell us about their experiences of publicly-funded systems of care, we make four recommendations to the government of Manitoba. These recommendations underscore the need for improved access to culture for youth, the need for foster care licensing rules to safeguard child safety but to also reflect community norms, and the call for the government to formally embrace the wisdom of the Indigenous community through the establishment of a Grandmother's Council who can provide guidance to government in all departments that deliver services to children, youth, and families.

As provincial advocates for children and youth, we see the living legacy of the mistreatment and marginalization of Indigenous people and we are committed to continuing to examine ways in which public systems can be improved to meet the needs of all members of the community. We invite all Manitobans to join us as we walk the path of reconciliation, and we welcome new conversations and new collaborations from all who seek a brighter, stronger future for all.

The full report can be accessed on the OCA's website: <http://www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Indigenous-Girls-web.pdf>

For more information or for media enquiries, please contact Ainsley Krone, Manager, Communications, Research, & Public Education, (204) 988-7475, or akrone@childrensadvocate.mb.ca

The Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) is an independent office of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. The OCA represents the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth throughout Manitoba who are receiving, or who should be receiving, services under The Child and Family Services Act and The Adoption Act. This includes advocating directly with children and youth and by reviewing services after the death of any young person who received child welfare services in the year preceding his or her death. The OCA also regularly publishes information and resources for the public on its work with Manitoba's children and youth.