

Pledge by Canada

Ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 13 December 1991

Ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 7 July 2000

Ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography on 14 September 2005



Pledges

1. Canada is committed to improve the safety and security of Indigenous children and families, by funding a network of 46 shelters and funding community-driven prevention projects.
2. Canada is also committed to ensuring accessible health care services through its suite of community-based Healthy Child Development programs (e.g., The Maternal and Child Health program; Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder programming; Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program - First Nations and Inuit Component; and Aboriginal Head Start).
3. Indigenous Services Canada has worked closely with First Nations partners to transform how it funds and supports elementary and secondary education in Canada to improve the success and outcomes of First Nations students.

1) In light of the commitments we have made under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as applicable, we have undertaken the following to highlight our commitment to the promotion, protection and realization of the rights of the child in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention:

Summary: Canada is committed to improve the safety and security of Indigenous children and families, by funding a network of 46 shelters and funding community-driven prevention projects. In Canada, Indigenous Peoples are victimized by violence at more than double the rate of non-Indigenous People (Boyce, 2016), with Indigenous women and girls at the highest risk. Shelters serving First Nations communities across Canada provide a vital place of refuge for women and their children, help them escape situations of violence, and provide education and support to prevent future violence. The initiative is led by the Family Violence Prevention Program under the federal purview of Indigenous Services Canada, which implements and monitors the activities of the program. In addition, the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, a national Indigenous organization, provides support to the network of 46 shelters on reserve.

- **What?**

Health care for Indigenous children and youth

Improving the well-being and quality of life of First Nations children is one of the Government of Canada's highest priorities. The ongoing work being undertaken, in collaboration with First Nations

partners through Jordan's Principle and the Child and Family Services Program, is helping to put an end to the inequalities faced by many First Nations children living in Canada. For example, the Government of Canada is committed to the full implementation of Jordan's Principle—a Canadian child-first initiative—to ensure that First Nations children receive the help they need, when and where they need it.

Canada is also committed to ensuring accessible health care services through its suite of community-based Healthy Child Development programs (e.g., The Maternal and Child Health program; Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder programming; Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program - First Nations and Inuit Component; and Aboriginal Head Start).

Care, safety, and protection of Indigenous children and youth

The Government of Canada has committed to six points of action to address the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in care in Canada and to reform Indigenous child and family services, including the co-development of legislation on Indigenous child and family services. On June 21, 2019, Bill C-92, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, received Royal Assent. The Act is consistent with the Government of Canada's ratification of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

One of the ways in which Canada has demonstrated its commitments made under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols is its investment in the Family Violence Prevention Program at Indigenous Services Canada.

The program has two funding components:

- the day to day operations of a network of 46 shelters that provide services for Indigenous women and their children living on reserve fleeing violence; and
- annual or multi-year community-driven prevention projects to prevent violence, sexual exploitation, and empower women and girls as well as involving men and boys, such as public awareness campaigns, conferences, workshops, stress and anger management seminars, on and off reserve.

Education for Indigenous children and youth

Indigenous Services Canada has worked closely with First Nations partners to transform how it funds and supports elementary and secondary education in Canada to improve the success and outcomes of First Nations students.

The new transformative approach provides predictable base funding for First Nations that is more comparable to Canadian provincial education systems and includes supplementary funds to address specific First Nations needs and priorities. The new approach allows greater flexibility for First Nations to access and direct resources to meet the educational needs of their communities. At the same time, the Government of Canada is working with First Nation partners to develop and negotiate regional First Nations-led education agreements across the country, which represents a significant step towards First Nations control of First Nations education.

Furthermore, commitments have been made to work collaboratively with Inuit and Métis partners to develop kindergarten to Grade 12 education agreements for the purpose of making further gains in education outcomes for Inuit and Métis students.

Indigenous Services Canada will continue to work closely with Inuit partners to develop policy options in priority areas that were recently co-developed by the federal and Inuit leaders in order to reach better outcomes for elementary and secondary education in Inuit Nunangat.

A Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed that commits to the development of a Canada-Métis Nation kindergarten to Grade 12 education agreement to address barriers that hinder better education outcomes for Métis children.

- **Why?**

Care, safety, and protection of Indigenous children and youth

As a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991, the Government of Canada is fully committed to implementing its obligations including taking all appropriate measures to protect children from abuse and violence. The purpose of the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* is to affirm the rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in relation to child and family services; establish national principles to help guide the provision of child and family services in relation to Indigenous children; and contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

All forms of violence, including family violence, are risk factors that have an impact on the health, social, and economic well-being of families and children. The program supports protection and prevention activities that impact children, before or when they become victims of family violence.

The goal of the Family Violence Prevention Program at Indigenous Services Canada is to improve the safety and security of Indigenous women, children, and families. Shelters serving First Nations communities across Canada provide a vital place of refuge for women and their children, help them escape situations of violence, and provide education and support to prevent future violence.

Referrals to emergency shelters are made by service providers to address family violence (Allen 2014, Munch 2012). In Canada, Indigenous Peoples are victimized by violence at more than double the rate of non-Indigenous People (Boyce, 2016), with Indigenous women and girls at the highest risk. According to the latest Canadian Census of Population, 4% of Canadian women (aged 18 and older), and 8% of children (aged 0 to 17) are Indigenous.

Indigenous women and girls are also vastly overrepresented as victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. While Indigenous women and girls make up only 4% of the Canadian population, they represent approximately 50% of trafficking victims – a quarter of whom are under 18 years old (Roudometkina and Wakeford, 2018). In a recent survey of Residential Facilities for Victims of Abuse, 22% of women (aged 18 and over) and 25% of children residing in facilities for victims of abuse were Indigenous (Moreau, 2017).

In Canada, 52.2% of children in foster care in private homes under the age of fifteen are Indigenous, but Indigenous children account for only 7.7% of the child population, according to the Canadian Census 2016.

Education for Indigenous children and youth

Children hold a sacred place in the cultures of Indigenous Peoples. With that comes a sacred responsibility to care for them. High-quality, culturally-specific and well-supported early learning and child care and healthy child development programs, services and supports that are specifically

designed for and with Indigenous families and communities will make a genuine difference in the early experiences of children. This, in turn, will support children's long-term development and life outcomes.

The Government of Canada believes that every Indigenous child deserves the best start in life. While educational outcomes for First Nations students, ordinarily resident on-reserve, are improving, there remains a persistent gap. In 2016, 44% of on-reserve status Indians, aged 18-24, had completed high school, compared to 88% for other Canadians (2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada). The reasons for this outcome gap are multiple and complex; including the intergenerational legacy of residential schools, loss of language and culture, historic inadequacy of funding, poverty and other socio-economic barriers on-reserves.

The Government of Canada recognizes that these persistent gaps in educational progression and stagnant graduation rates further indicate a need to fundamentally rethink how education programming is managed and funded by the Federal Government of Canada. This includes the need for reformed funding approaches, which more accurately address regional variances in education tuition costs, are more representative of student needs, and better address First Nations' priorities such as language and cultural programming.

The new transformative approach to First Nations elementary and secondary education, the commitments to co-develop education policies that meet Inuit and Métis children's elementary and secondary education needs also align with Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as it preserves the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples with regards to control of their educational systems and institutions, and in providing education in a culturally-appropriate manner that meets their needs.

There is a clear need for improvement in attainment levels for Inuit and Métis children in elementary and secondary education. In 2016, only 20% of Inuit People 25 to 64 and almost 40% of Métis People of the same age category had graduated high school. These statistics show an increase in secondary education attainment compared to 10 years prior when less than 15% of Inuit People aged 25 to 64 and about 23% of Métis aged 25 to 64 did not have a high school diploma. However, there is ample room for improvement. That is why the Government of Canada has committed to working with Inuit and Métis partners to address barriers to better educational outcomes.

- **How?**

Health care for Indigenous children and youth

Jordan's Principle is a legal obligation that responds to unmet needs of First Nations children no matter where they live in Canada. It makes sure that all First Nations children can access the government services they need, when they need them, including health, educational, and social services or products. The Canadian Federal Budget in 2019 announced \$1.2 billion CAD over three years for Jordan's Principle. However, as a legal principle, Jordan's Principle will not end.

Care, safety, and protection of Indigenous children and youth

The *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* is designed for Indigenous Peoples to exercise partial or full jurisdiction over child and family services at their own pace. Depending on the path chosen, the exercise of their jurisdiction could result in their laws prevailing over federal, provincial and territorial laws.

Shelters are constructed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation through its Shelter Enhancement Program. The Family Violence Prevention Program at Indigenous Services Canada has an annual budget of \$31.7 million CAD on an ongoing basis to support the operational funding of shelters, and family violence prevention activities on and off reserve.

Under Canada's Federal Budget in 2016, new funding was provided to address family violence:

- \$10.4 million CAD over three years for the construction of five new shelters for victims of family violence in First Nations communities, increasing the total number of shelters to 46; and
- \$33.6 million CAD over five years and up to \$8.3 million CAD ongoing in additional funding to better support shelters serving victims of violence in First Nations communities.

The Family Violence Prevention Program supports violence prevention activities that increase awareness of family violence, and provides families and communities with the tools to address violence. Such tools include treatment and intervention, culturally sensitive services (Elder and traditional teachings), along with awareness and self-development projects. Over 300 family violence prevention projects are supported annually.

Priority themes for prevention projects include: outreach to Indigenous youth on the prevention of family violence, engagement of Indigenous men and boys, empowerment of Indigenous women and girls, reducing the vulnerability to violence associated with the transition between on-reserve and off-reserve living environments, addressing trafficking and sexual exploitation, prevention and protection needs assessments, as well as wrap-around services and case management for victims of family violence, including children.

The program also has service delivery arrangements with the Yukon territory and the province of Alberta to reimburse the cost of maintaining an individual or family ordinarily resident on-reserve at family violence shelters, using provincial or territorial per diem rates and rules. Another aspect of the reform includes fully implementing the orders of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal by funding the actual costs of First Nations child and family service agencies and working with partners to ensure that the system is focused on prevention and early intervention.

Education for Indigenous children and youth

Indigenous Services Canada is creating a more financially stable environment for First Nations education in Canada by enabling better quality and more consistent supports for students, schools, educators, communities, and First Nations education organizations – conditions that help improve student outcomes. There is a further commitment to expand language, culture, and full-time kindergarten programming. Indigenous Services Canada is also working collaboratively with First Nations partners to undertake a comprehensive review of the Federal Department's funding for First Nations special education.

First Nations-led education agreements will be negotiated and implemented, identifying how the Government of Canada can best support First Nations schools, students, communities, and education organizations in ensuring that First Nations students receive a high quality, linguistically and culturally appropriate education.

The Government of Canada is committed to working collaboratively with Inuit partners and co-developing policy options to better support Inuit kindergarten to Grade 12 education priorities. In June 2019, federal and Inuit leaders endorsed joint policy recommendations which outline two key

priority areas: i) Inuit kindergarten to Grade 12 Schooling; and ii) Inuit Teacher Education, Recruitment and Retention. They call upon the Government of Canada to work together in addressing the needs of Inuit children with disabilities, supporting language and culture programming, preparing Inuit for key education professions and co-developing regionally-based Inuit teacher recruitment and retention strategies. The federal and Inuit partners will continue to work on policy options in both priority areas.

In October 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed that commits to the development of a Canada-Métis Nation 10-year kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Sub-Accord. This Sub-Accord is expected to support the examination of jurisdictional issues and ways to enhance Métis Nation capacity to participate in the kindergarten to Grade 12 education systems, and the establishment of linkages and cultural supports for Métis kindergarten to Grade 12 students to improve their education outcomes.

- **When?**

Health care for Indigenous children and youth

Canada has made an ongoing commitment to an inclusive national engagement process that yields a sustainable, long-term approach to ensure First Nations children have access to the services and supports they need for April 1, 2019 and beyond. Regional experience and knowledge have also guided this work. Since June 2017, the Assembly of First Nations and Canada have been supporting the co-development of long-term policy options for Jordan's Principle through the Jordan's Principle Action Table.

Care, safety, and protection of Indigenous children and youth

Ongoing key activities are monitored through annual reports that collect the following information:

- number of women served;
- number of women turned away due to capacity of shelter (full);
- number of children served; and
- shelter stays by length and frequency.

Starting in 2019-2020, shelter program reporting will also monitor the types of services available to victims of human trafficking, and for male victims of family violence. Shelters funded by Indigenous Services Canada do not provide beds specifically for victims of human trafficking.

The provisions of the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* will come into force on a day or days to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council in Canada. This will contribute to the ultimate goal of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program: improving the safety and well-being of First Nations children and decreasing their over-representation compared to non-Indigenous children.

Education for Indigenous children and youth

Implementation and operationalization of the new transformative funding model began in April 2019. The negotiation of First Nations-led education agreements is ongoing. A review of the Department's funding for First Nations special education will be completed by the fall of 2019, with reform of the implementation of the Department's High Cost Special Education programming in 2020-2021.

The Government of Canada and Inuit partners are committed to collaborating to develop an agreement for Kindergarten to Grade 12 education for Inuit children. In June 2019, the priority areas

for collaboration were identified and the partners continue to develop policy options, including corresponding funding models where required.

Indigenous Services Canada is working with Métis partners to develop the draft kindergarten to Grade 12 Sub-Accord which is anticipated to be signed in the next fiscal year.

- **Who?**

Federal Canadian departments leading and monitoring these actions are Employment and Social Development Canada (Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care); Indigenous Services Canada; and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Also, Provinces, territories, and local service organizations within regions governed by individual First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities; Tribal Councils; regional organizations; and Urban Indigenous organizations.

Care, safety, and protection of Indigenous children and youth

The Family Violence Prevention Program is under the federal purview of Indigenous Services Canada, which implements and monitors the activities of the program.

In addition, the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, a national Indigenous organization, provides support to the network of 46 shelters on reserve. As a key civil society organization, it provides training, advocacy, develops tools for the front-line shelter staff and directors working in the Indigenous Services Canada funded shelters.

The department also works closely with other federal departments including the Public Health Agency of Canada, Women and Gender Equality, and Public Safety Canada to address issues related to gender based violence.

Education for Indigenous children and youth

Indigenous Services Canada will be working in partnership with First Nations, provincial and territorial governments, and other education stakeholders to provide eligible First Nations students with the support they need to help close the socio-economic gap between Canada's First Nations Peoples and other Canadians.

To develop sub-accords on kindergarten to Grade 12 education for Inuit and Métis children, the Government of Canada is working with Inuit and Métis partners to co-develop policies that will aim for better elementary and secondary education outcomes.

To ensure a smooth transition and implementation of the Act, Indigenous Services Canada is exploring, with partners, the creation of transition governance structures, with distinctions based underpinnings. Members could include representatives from First Nations, Inuit, Métis, self-governing and Treaty Nations; provincial and territorial representatives; child advocates; and others with relevant experience and knowledge to provide advice and recommendations.

2) We have made the following plans to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention:

Information on events to be planned will be shared at a later date.