

# LIFTING NWT CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

An All of Territory Approach to Keeping Families Together

Thank you to the children and youth in the territory who shared courageously with us. We heard you, we respect you, we value you. From you, we learn and take your lead.

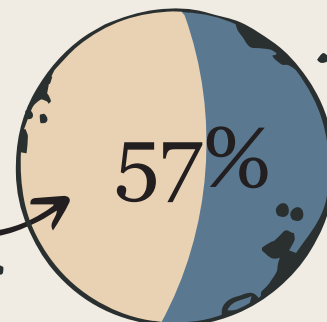
## Call for Champions

All children are sacred. NWT children and youth are talented, unique and powerful. But not all children and youth have access to what they need. Over 98% of children and youth in care in the NWT are Indigenous, even though just 57% of the population of children and youth are Indigenous. The extent of destruction and trauma on Indigenous peoples, families and communities due to colonization, residential school and the Sixties Scoop, and the resulting overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in care is **a territorial crisis** that requires an all of territory response.

We call for champions at all levels of governments, Indigenous governments and groups, non-governmental organizations, and allies to work together to provide a broader continuum of care, including supports and resources for all children and youth across the NWT.

98% Of children and youth in care in the NWT are Indigenous

Indigenous children and youth in NWT



# Who are we?

The Standing Committee on Social Development (Committee) is a group of Regular Members of the Legislative Assembly. The Committee reviews legislation alongside NWT residents and makes recommendations to the territorial government to improve legislation, policies and process.

In April 2021, we began a mandatory review of the *Child and Family Services Act*. The review focused on prevention strategies to lift children, youth and families with **the ultimate goal to keep NWT families together**.

Given the importance of this work, it was important to our team that this work was done differently. We took a holistic approach to how we engaged with community members, Indigenous governments and groups, and non-governmental organizations to help people feel comfortable speaking about difficult things. To create safe spaces, private and confidential listening sessions, counsellor and elder support, and mental health resources were made available. We are grateful to every individual who shared their perspectives, insights and lived experiences.

## What Does Culture Mean?

Culture is the living, breathing embodiment of a people expressed in all aspects of life beginning before birth and is present throughout a person's entire journey. Over time, culture changes and innovates. Culture is a source of strength, healing and positive identity. Therefore, respectful incorporation of culture must be visible in implementing the recommendations below.





**After extensive research, listening and engagement, the Committee made several recommendations to the Government of the Northwest Territories:**

- 1 Declare the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in care a crisis and develop a whole of government response in partnership with Indigenous governments
- 2 Provide birthing support that is holistic, client-centered and culturally safe with doula and midwife services staffed in each regional center
- 3 Establish a territorial treatment addictions recovery program or treatment supports specifically for youth so they can remain in the territory and maintain their support systems
- 4 Expand housing options for youth by collaborating with communities and non-governmental organizations to find safe places for youth to stay
- 5 Tailor the Healthy Family Program for vulnerable families and expand it to all 33 communities
- 6 Provide additional funding for recreational facilities and programming so that families have increased access to these spaces and add funding for children and youth in care to participate in extracurricular activities

7 Establish family mentorship pilot projects that pair vulnerable parents with grandparents or elders

8 Provide more funding towards addictions recovery on the land healing options for youth

9 Establish culturally safe and gender-inclusive family violence shelters in every community

10 Deliver and make mandatory culturally safe and trauma-informed training for foster families

11 Establish a recruitment strategy to increase the number of Indigenous foster families

12 Develop an evaluation and monitoring framework for Child and Family Services, including a data profile on those in care

13 Establish an Indigenous Advisory Body sub-committee for Child and Family Services

14 Increase online resources for Child and Family Services ensuring they are easily accessible and culturally safe

15 Provide legal services to parents as early as the plan of care stage with Child and Family Services

16 Change the *Child and Family Services Act* to support the readiness of Indigenous governments to draw down jurisdiction for child welfare, use trauma-informed language and ensure culture continuity

17 Establish a spectrum of service available to people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and their families/caregivers

18 Report progress annually on the Committee's recommendations

It takes all of us to make change and keep this conversation going. We encourage you to reflect, discuss, engage, and lift children and youth.



Read the detailed report here:  
[ntassembly.ca/keepingfamiliesstogether](https://ntassembly.ca/keepingfamiliesstogether)

