



**February/March 2016**

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## **Collecting Race-Based Data to Dramatically Improve Child Welfare Services**



Kike Ojo, Project Manager of [One Vision One Voice: Changing the Child Welfare System for African Canadians](#), explains how acknowledging racial differences will result in better service.

**In 2015, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto released race-based statistics indicating that African Canadian children make up 41% of children in care, even though they make up only 8% of the population in the GTA. What do these race-based data tell you?**

Those numbers tell us that we are in a crisis with certain communities in terms of overrepresentation, and that we could be doing a much better job serving some groups of people, notably Indigenous and African Canadian communities. Data like these tell us

there is a legitimate reason to focus on particular identities and experiences.

### **Why are those numbers so high?**

Before we can talk about the role that child welfare has played in fostering these high numbers, we need to acknowledge the social context of systemic racism that increases the risk of child welfare involvement for African Canadian and Indigenous families. Issues such as unemployment and underemployment, unfair and inequitable immigration policies, inadequate housing, and negative narratives about marginalized people mean that these communities are subjected to greater scrutiny, harsher evaluations, and more extreme requirements. By not collecting, analyzing, and reporting data, our system can ignore its own role in perpetuating the systemic racism experienced by these communities.

### **How would releasing these numbers improve child welfare services?**

Right now in child welfare in Ontario we're trying to provide services to African Canadian families without centering these services on the very real issues that are part of their everyday lives. We're trying to resolve the gap in services, enhance service effectiveness, and improve how staff are trained to do their jobs without using service models informed by the actual populations we serve. The only way to achieve these goals is by intricately understanding the reality of the people we work with. Gathering race-based data will help us better understand these issues so we can rectify the situation.

Read the full story [here](#).

## **Landmark Decision by Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and What It Means for Child Welfare**

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, on behalf of its 44 member Children's Aid Societies, welcomes the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's ruling that the federal government has discriminated against First Nations children on reserves by failing to provide the same level of child welfare services that exist elsewhere in Canada. The human rights complaint was originally filed in 2007 by Cindy Blackstock of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations



"As the association that represents Children's Aid Societies across the province, including six Aboriginal agencies, we see the impact of underfunding child welfare services on First Nations children and families daily," says Mary Ballantyne, Chief Executive Officer of OACAS. "This lack of services has undoubtedly led to children being separated from their families."

### **Lack of on-reserve child welfare services means more First Nations children end up in care**

Today, over 21% of children in care in Ontario are Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit), even though they represent just 3% of the population. The majority of these Indigenous children come into care because their caregivers are struggling with mental health issues, addictions, and poverty, all of which are a legacy of government discrimination, social and economic inequity, and cultural genocide. Making culturally appropriate support available in a timely fashion to First Nations children and their families on reserve would reduce the number of children coming into care. In this way, child welfare can play the supportive role it is meant to, enhancing a family's strengths and ability to keep children safe.

"The statistics speak to the inequities Indigenous children experience in virtually every facet of their lives," says [Karen Hill, Aboriginal child welfare expert at OACAS](#). "This ruling will hopefully see increased resources and supports available to Indigenous children so they are able to participate in an equal way with other children in Canada."

Read the full story [here](#).

## **13 Responses from Child Welfare to the Jeffrey Baldwin Inquest Recommendations**



Provincial inquests offer meaningful and valuable insights into tragic deaths and how they can be prevented from happening again. Jeffrey Baldwin's death in 2002 was a tragedy that shocked and saddened the entire child welfare sector. The inquest into the death of Jeffrey Baldwin and the jury's recommendations, which were released on February 14, 2014, provided meaningful insight into his death and further opportunities for

improvement of the child welfare system.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and its member Children's Aid Societies have conducted a thorough review and analysis of the 13 recommendations directed at CASs across Ontario. Here are the 13 key ways child welfare practice is responding to the inquest recommendations and improving child welfare practice in the province.

Read the full story [here](#).

## Blake, an Indigenous Youth in Care, Shares His Memories of Bark Lake

Every summer for the past three years, Indigenous youth in care have gathered on the shores of Bark Lake in Kawartha-Haliburton to learn about their language, culture, and identity. The Bark Lake Youth Conference, first held at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto in 2012, is one way that the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and its member Children's Aid Societies are ensuring [Indigenous youth in care remain connected to their roots](#).

The ongoing event is part of the broader framework of [reconciliation](#) and is an opportunity to rebuild relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in Ontario.

Blake, one of the youth in care who attended the Bark Lake gathering for the past two summers, generously shared his experiences with OACAS.

Watch his story now:



## Navigating the Ontario Adoption System Made Easier

Individuals wishing to expand their families through adoption will be able to navigate

the Ontario adoption system more smoothly thanks to new educational materials launched by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. The materials have been endorsed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, which oversees Ontario's adoption system. [Families can adopt through public](#), private, or international streams., private, or international streams. The materials were developed because adoption professionals recognized that many families were experiencing confusion as they pursued adoption simultaneously through these different streams.

"There are a lot of frustrated families out there struggling with how to navigate the different adoption streams," says Morag Demers, Senior Policy Analyst at OACAS. "These resources will make it easier to move from one stream of adoption to another."

**"Adoption In Ontario: Private, Public and Inter-Country"** is a brochure for prospective adoptive parents that clarifies how the three adoption streams in Ontario work. The pamphlet describes the three different streams and the requirements families must complete to be approved as an adoptive applicant, including a SAFE home study and PRIDE pre-service training. The brochure clarifies for prospective adoptive families that these requirements are portable across systems.

**"Best Practices of the Portability of PRIDE Pre-Service Training and a SAFE Home Study"** is a guide intended for Ontario adoption professionals. The purpose of the guide is to provide clarity and transparency around the portability of the home evaluation and training requirements for adoptive parents across the different adoptions streams in Ontario.

Read the full story [here](#).

## BEST PRACTICES OF THE PORTABILITY OF PRIDE PRE-SERVICE TRAINING AND A SAFE HOME STUDY



A Guide for Public, Private and Inter country Adoption professionals in Ontario



## Resources You Can Use

### ***PACY Takes on New Investigative Powers on March 1, 2016***

The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth assumes new investigative powers on March 1, 2016.

As outlined in [Bill 8, Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014](#), the Provincial Advocate cannot commence an individual investigation until the complaint is addressed through an existing complaint process, such as through the Child and Family Services Review Board or the local CAS's internal complaint process. [Click here](#) to learn more about what this means for your agency.

**Provincial Advocate  
for Children & Youth**

**L'intervenant provincial  
en faveur des enfants & des jeunes**

***Breaking Barriers: Understanding Intimate Partner Violence in Child Welfare***



A new guide from PART (Practice and Research Together) on understanding intimate partner violence and its impact on women and children is now available. Nearly 50% of investigations into child abuse in Ontario involve *children who were exposed to intimate partner violence*.

### ***Emotichrome: An App that Pictures Your Emotions***

COPA (*le Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions*) has released a new app to help children increase their emotional intelligence and ability to communicate how they're feeling to their caregivers.



Image from COPA (*le Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions*)

## **Upcoming Events**

### **CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS**

*Wisdom 2 Action: Best Practices to Support Young Refugees*. Toronto, March 2, 2016.

*Picturing Wellness: From Adversity to Resilience*. Hamilton, March 3-5, 2016.

*Adoption Resource Exchange Conference*. Toronto, April 17, 2016.

Reconciliation Through Culturally Appropriate Child Welfare Practices. Sarnia, April 26-28, 2016. [Click here to register](#) and [here to submit an abstract](#).

*Indigenous Health Conference: Towards Health & Reconciliation*. Toronto, May 26-27, 2016.

International Conference on Innovations in Family Engagement. Fort Worth, Texas, November 1-4, 2016. Applications to present are due March 31, 2016. [Click here](#) to learn more and to register.

### **COMMUNITY EVENT**

*Free Dinner to Celebrate Launch of A Circle of Caring: A Multimedia Resource for FNMI*. Cambridge, March 2, 2016.

### **CONTEST**

*Art and Creative Writing Competition for Aboriginal Youth*. Aboriginal Arts & Stories, March 31, 2016 submission deadline.

## Send Us Your News and Events!

The Voice has an extensive readership in Ontario and across Canada.

Please forward any child-welfare related news, events, or announcements to [webadmin@oacas.org](mailto:webadmin@oacas.org) for possible inclusion in our monthly newsletter.



**Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies**  
The voice of child welfare in Ontario



**L'Association ontarienne des  
sociétés de l'aide à l'enfance**  
Unis pour le bien-être des enfants de l'Ontario

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