

investigations involving First Nations children was 4.2 times the rate of non-Aboriginal investigations.¹⁶ The study also found that in the population under review, those allegations were more likely to be substantiated in the cases of First Nations children. This was true for all categories of maltreatment, but the difference was most extreme for investigations of neglect.¹⁷ Investigations of First Nations families for neglect were substantiated at a rate eight times greater than for the non-Aboriginal population.¹⁸

An analysis of the Canadian Incidence Study confirmed that poverty and social stressors are major factors in child-welfare investigations involving Aboriginal families. Aboriginal parents were more likely to experience a host of serious risk factors, including domestic violence, alcohol abuse, lack of social supports, drug or solvent abuse, and a history of living in foster care or group homes.¹⁹ The direct connection between Aboriginal poverty and high child-welfare apprehensions has been known for half a century. Yet, Aboriginal children are still taken away from their parents because their parents are poor.

Researchers suggest that clear standards are needed to guide apprehensions, and that the provision of family supports and prevention services might be a better response to concerns than removal of the child.²⁰ There must be a commitment to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care and developing supports to keep families together. Child-welfare workers must bring to their work an understanding of Aboriginal culture as well as an understanding of the lasting harms caused by residential schools.

Call to Action

- 1) We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by:
 - i. Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations.
 - ii. Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.
 - iii. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools.
 - iv. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.
 - v. Requiring that all child-welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.