

Better research and data are also required in order to monitor and develop strategies to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in care.

Call to Action

- 2) We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, to prepare and publish annual reports on the number of Aboriginal children (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) who are in care, compared with non-Aboriginal children, as well as the reasons for apprehension, the total spending on preventive and care services by child-welfare agencies, and the effectiveness of various interventions.

Death and abuse of children in care

The child-welfare system apprehends too many Aboriginal children while, at the same time, failing to protect them. The Commission heard many stories of mistreatment in foster homes. One woman told us that her foster parents physically and sexually abused her. Her Aboriginal identity was constantly disparaged. She said, “[My foster parents were] adamant about Aboriginal culture being less than human, living as dirty bush people, eating rats. It made me not want to be one of those people. And for years, I didn’t know how to be proud of who I was because I didn’t know who I was.”²¹

Linda Clarke was placed in a foster home with three other children.

In that foster home there was a pedophile, and I don’t [know] what was happening to anybody else, but I became his target. The mother used to always send me to do errands with him. And so every time, he would make me do things to him and then he would give me candy. Also, in that home there was no hugging of us foster kids or anything like that. And I carried a great guilt for many, many years, because sometimes I didn’t want to resist it, I just.... But I knew it was very bad.²²

Sometimes, child-welfare placements end in tragedy. Where there are province-specific statistics available, the findings suggest that in some parts of the country, Aboriginal children who come into contact with child-welfare authorities are significantly more likely to die.

Research in Alberta indicated that 78% of children who have died in foster care between 1999 and mid-2013 were Aboriginal.²³ Since Aboriginal children, a minority of the overall population, represent 59% of children in care in Alberta, the rate of Aboriginal child deaths in care is even more disproportionate than the apprehension rate. Of the seventy-four recorded deaths of Aboriginal children in care, thirteen were due to accidents, twelve children committed suicide, and ten children were the victims of homicide.²⁴ Forty-five of