



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – July 16, 2024**

**Family Support Institute of BC (FSI) applauds Representative for Children and Youth's report on tragic case and calls for systemic reform**

**(July 16, 2024 – Vancouver, BC)**— The Family Support Institute of BC (FSI) extends its heartfelt commendation to the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) for the meticulous and compassionate preparation of the recent report addressing the torture and tragic death of a young Indigenous boy with complex health needs while under the care of the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD). This report sheds light on the grave shortcomings and lack of oversight that plagued the boy's final months, a period marked by increasing isolation and complexity, with no intervention despite staff capacity being raised.

The RCY's investigation revealed a staggering 6,437 reports of injury or death among children in the care of MCFD, with over half of these cases deemed critical in nature. This phenomenon of violence, profoundly affecting many, was highlighted by numerous Indigenous leaders at today's event held at the Vancouver Convention Centre, which was also streamed online to thousands.

The Honourable Grace Lore, Minister of Child and Family Development, made a significant statement at the event, committing to the creation and development of a system focused on prevention and the wellbeing of children and families. Minister Lore pledged to build a proactive system with improved coordination and connectivity of services, determined to break down barriers that hinder safety and support for families. She emphasized the need to reconfigure services to be outcome-based and to address violence head-on. Importantly, Minister Lore spoke about separating child protection from family support, an issue FSI has advocated for years and wholeheartedly supports.


The RCY has called on the provincial government to establish a Child Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan, a recommendation that the Family Support Institute of BC backs with full force. At FSI, we hear from thousands each year and have collected numerous stories of harm and neglect within the current system. We fully support the creation of a new system that places child and family wellbeing at its core, providing equitable access to necessary services and supports.

The report specifically addresses the experiences of Indigenous children and youth and their families, aiming to end the enduring harms of colonization once and for all. Several Nations in B.C., including Colby's Nation, have resumed jurisdiction over their own child welfare or are in the process of doing so. While this is a necessary step given the history, it is also true that colonial harms have, in some ways, become adopted behaviours within Nations. There has been a normalization of oppressive, violent, and discriminatory behaviours and attitudes, causing ongoing harm within communities. This issue is complex and multifaceted, requiring deep and sustained commitment to address.

The report also states that supports to Nations must include significant resources to help not just children, but entire communities, to heal from the ongoing harms caused by colonization. FSI has made a firm commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and stands as an ally to Nations in their efforts to

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decolonize services and supports, moving towards Nation-led approaches. We recognize the importance of supporting Indigenous leadership in creating systems that reflect their values, cultures, and needs.

The theme of today's report release, "Don't Look Away," resonates deeply with us. We are compelled never to look away from the realities affecting children, youth, and their families as we rebuild and heal together, moving towards a better, more enhanced system of care.

FSI stands ready for the hard conversations and is committed to bringing solutions and barrier-free supports to the forefront of our work. We support a new system that is responsive to the needs of families, underpinned by permanency and kinship care, and dedicated to lifting families up and keeping people safe.

Find the RCY's report and associated documents here: <https://rcybc.ca/hfaq/dont-look-away/>.

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#### **About Family Support Institute of BC:**

The Family Support Institute (FSI) supports families who have family members with disabilities and mental health challenges. FSI is unique in Canada and is the only grass-roots, family-to-family support organization. FSI believes families are the best resource to support one another and the most vital voice for their family members. FSI supports all families with children of all ages, disabilities, and concurrent conditions. FSI's supports are free to any family.

#### **For more information, please contact:**

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