

**aah chishtipistihch awaash-uschiniichisiu
sikischaayimuwiniyiu**

Cree Youth Protection Commission





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Task Force & Commission | *Awaash Uschiniichisuu Sikischchaayimuwinuu*

The CBHSSJB Board of Directors established the **Task Force** in **2021** to better adapt youth protection and youth criminal justice services to the specific needs and realities of the Cree context.

Task Force partners:

- Cree Nation Government departments of Justice and Correctional Services, Child and Family Services, Eeyou Eenou Police Force, Social and Cultural Development
- Cree School Board
- Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association
- Nishiiyuu Council of Elders
- Cree Nation Youth Council

Chaashtipishtihch (Commissioners):

- Bella M. Petawabano and Lorraine Spencer were appointed in 2022, mandated to report to the Task Force on significant concerns regarding youth protection and youth criminal justice matters in Eeyou Istchee, and ways to address these concerns.
- The Final Report and Recommendations reflect the **analysis and conclusions of the Commissioners.**



Touchstones of Hope:

Guiding principles and starting observations



We need to understand the roots of the problems

- *The roots of the problem lie in our collective past, ranging from the attitude of missionaries towards liyuu liyituuwin; our previous status as "non-citizens" under the Indian Act; Residential Schools; Relocations and disruptions caused by major projects, etc.*

The goal is to make recommendations that will strengthen system and transform services

- *Find and reinforce common values as the basis for reorienting services;*
- *strengthening liyiyiu iitaayihTimuwin as a core way to articulate our values*



TIMELINE | 2021-2025



Note: The findings reflect the lived realities, perceptions, and sometimes conflicting views within the communities.

Ongoing progress

The CBHSSJB Strategic Regional Plan includes an objective to ensure **access to care** & services for children and youth measured by the number of youth on the evaluation/orientation waiting list and the number on the application of measures waiting list.

- Recommendations: To increase the number of land-based activities; partnerships with Eeyou-Eenou entities; access to psychosocial support and mental health services; access to respite services, and employee retention.

Report recognizes improvement measures in progress, including:

- **Nisk Model of Care** – Services that talk to each other and coordinate around the person’s journey. Not having to repeat your story. Eliminate silos.
- **Family Group Conferencing** – Program to help families find their own pathway to healing, in a safe and non-judgmental setting
- **Nishiiyuu** – wrap around services for rites of passage
- **Support for Miyupimaatsiun Committees** – Local coordination of programs to support youth and families in the community
- **Wiichiiwaawin Helpline** 24/7 confidential phone helpline for access to mental health support.
- Recognition of the importance of **trauma and healing-informed** approaches. Training staff in these approaches.



Summary of Recommendations | *Youth Protection, Youth Healing and Foster Homes Services*

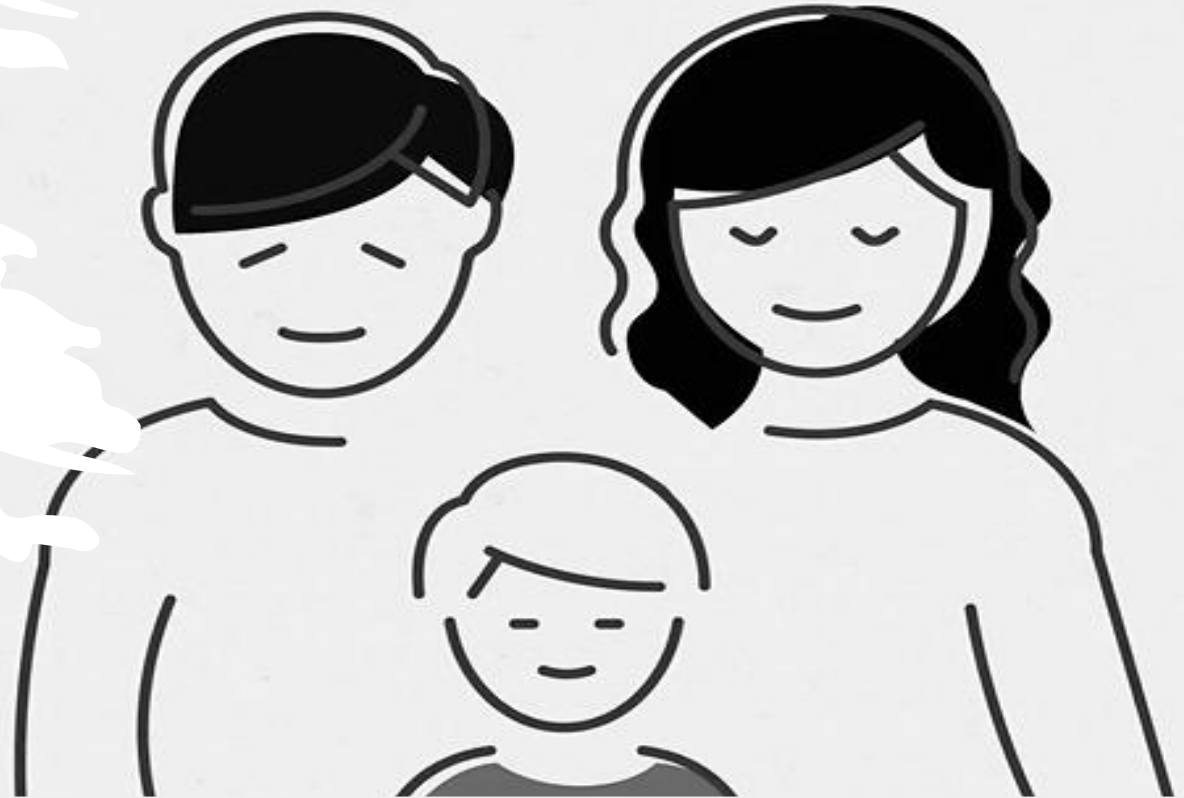


Areas for Improvement by the CBHSSJB

- Youth protection is a critical service under pressure.
- Pressure on services affects staff retention, and community trust.
- Need to improve understanding, communicate clearly

System Gaps

- Lack of preventive services in communities
- Overuse of signalment due to missing early preventative supports that meets the needs of families
- Delays in clinical assessments, especially specialized mental health for complex care planning



Communication & Clarity

- Youth Protection system is poorly understood by families and perception can add further stigma
- Lack of clarity on what information can/should be shared between/within services (confidentiality)



More Recommendations for Service Improvements | Through Healing-Informed, Accountable Practice

1. Center Every Youth's Journey

- Life, cultural & intervention plans for all youth in care
- Dedicated transition planning for youth aging out
- Closer monitoring of well-being in foster care

2. Build Skilled, Culturally Grounded Practice

- Continuous training rooted in *liiyiyu lyihtiwini*
- Expand Cree language and culture across services
- Enhance Youth Healing Services with Cree identity, community integration & belonging
- Offer culturally appropriate evidence-based parenting programs

3. Strengthen Collaboration & Transparency

- Consistent use of collaboration protocols
- Clear, safe information-sharing with families and partners
- Enhance Preventative and therapeutic community services with a focus on vulnerable families

4. Improve System Responsiveness & Reduce Burden

- Improve RTS response times
- Reduced administrative load for YP worker

"By coming together, we can weave our reconnections to relearn, revive and reclaim our own values and knowledge, practices and approaches around raising healthy and thriving children and youth, including to acknowledge the strengths of liiyiyu/linuu family structures and protective practices."



Social Determinants of Health

Poverty, economic insecurity, social inequalities, are key issues behind the need for YP services, that we must work on together

Recommendations of the Commission:

- Invest in prevention: community-based supports for vulnerable families
- Periodically report on poverty and social inequities in Eeyou Istchee
- Help generate better data to inform planning and quality assurance.



Commissioners' Position on Legal Framework

Recommendation 10

At this time, the *Chaashtipishtihch* (Commissioners) **do not advise negotiating or proposing to develop a new youth protection law for Eeyou Istchee** as a solution to the current situation. Instead, for now, we suggest [...] acting on the recommendations of the AUS Task Force and continuing to pursue the adaptation of the application of the YPA to transform current practices to be more based on *liiyiu iyihitiwin*.

This will require the CBHSSJB to significantly change how the YPA is applied in Eeyou Istchee and directly involve Elders, extended family members or others (outside of the DYP and other CBHSSJB personnel).

Recommendation 11

That the CBHSSJB and the Cree Nation Government continue discussions with Quebec to ensure that the YPA and the YCJA can be applied in a way that is based on *liiyiu iyihitiwin* in Eeyou Istchee, and to ensure that the CBHSSJB has the resources required to do so.



Support from Communities and Regional Entities

Cultural Belonging

- Advance Eeyou Charter for Children and Families
- Speed implementation of Customary Guardianship and Adoption
- Continue focus on school attendance and after-school activities grounded in *liyiyiu liyituuwin*

Healing

- Invest in mental health support for frontline workers and first responders
- Build our workforce: expand and diversify post-secondary education and training in social services within Eeyou Istchee

Collaboration

- Work with CBHSSJB to track improvements
- Strong links with Childcare Centers and Head Start
- Strengthen YP/YHS collaboration with CNG, EEPF, Cree School Board
- Work with Miyupimaatisiun Committees



A Stronger System Begins with Listening

The challenges expressed by many participants reflect real experiences. We honour their stories.

Addressing their concerns requires collaboration, clarity, and care.

Key Takeaway: Transforming youth services requires a culturally grounded, family-centered, and trauma-informed approach.

Call to Action: Collaboration among Cree entities and communities to implement the Report's recommendations that concern them.

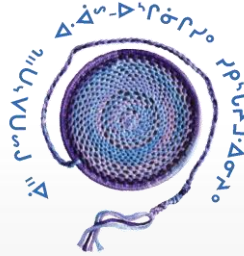
Our future is determined by how we protect, provide, care for and nurture our children



What can you do as governments and entities?

- You can assign your existing representatives to a future meeting of the Task Force or a similar meeting to work on the recommendations.
- We can approach your internal management committees to do presentations on the findings.
- You can set target dates to review the recommendations, and we can meet with you at an agreed date to begin addressing the recommendations.
- Other ideas and suggestions?





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Cree Youth Protection Commission

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Let's keep guiding it in the right direction

chininaaskumitaan, meegwetch, merci



Addendum A

Recommendations Concerning **Partners** of the CBHSSJB



Cree Nation Government

1. Cree Nation Government (CNG) and its Departments

These recommendations expect action, leadership, or collaboration **outside the Cree Health Board**, particularly from CNG governance and social sectors:

- **Recommendation #5** – Cree First Nations and the Cree Nation Government are asked to **facilitate discussions toward a unified Eeyou vision of values**, with local action plans for children and youth.
- **Recommendation #9** – The Cree Nation Government is asked to **lead the development of an Eeyou Charter for Children and Families**, grounded in *aatiyuuhkaanh* and written first in *iiyiyiuyimuwin*.
- **Recommendation #11** – The Cree Nation Government is expected to **continue Nation-to-Nation discussions with Quebec**, alongside CBHSSJB, to ensure the Youth Protection Act (YPA) and YCJA are applied in ways grounded in *liyiyiu liyituuwin*.
- **Recommendation #39** – The Cree Nation Government is asked to **actively support the implementation of Cree Customary Guardianship and Customary Adoption** in each community.
- **Recommendation #46** – The CNG Department of Justice and Correctional Services is to be **formally included in the DYP/YHS/EPPF Steering Group** to strengthen YCJA implementation.
- **Recommendation #48** – The Cree Nation Government (Justice and Correctional Services) is to collaborate on **Youth Justice Conferences** under the YCJA.



Eeyou Eenou Police Force (EEPF)

4. Eeyou Eenou Police Force (EEPF)

Several recommendations require **direct action by policing authorities**, not health services:

- **Recommendation #1** – The EEPF is included among emergency responders requiring **dedicated mental-health supports**.
- **Recommendation #46** – EEPF participation is required in the **expanded DYP/YHS/EEPF Steering Group**.
- **Recommendation #47** – The EEPF is asked to **implement extrajudicial measures** under the YCJA more consistently.
- **Recommendation #56** – The EEPF is included in the **multi-sectoral protocol implementation mandate**.



Cree School Board

3. Cree School Board (CSB)

The report directs several recommendations **squarely at the Cree School Board**, reflecting its central role:

- **Recommendation #30** – The Cree School Board is asked to **develop after-school programs** to improve attendance and youth engagement.
- **Recommendation #64** – The Cree School Board is encouraged to **develop a post-secondary Social Services program**, in collaboration with CBHSSJB.
- **Recommendation #56** – The Cree School Board is expected to **fully implement and monitor joint service protocols** with CBHSSJB and YP/YHS.



Cree First Nations

2. Cree First Nations (Local Community Governments)

These recommendations explicitly target **local Cree First Nations as governing bodies**, not CBHSSJB:

- **Recommendation #28** – Cree First Nations are asked to **develop and coordinate prevention programs**, supported by regional Cree entities.
- **Recommendation #29** – Local Cree First Nations are encouraged to empower **local Miyupimaatisiun Committees** to set prevention targets and oversee implementation.
- **Recommendation #30** – Cree First Nations (with CSB and recreation partners) are implicated in **after-school and youth engagement strategies**.



Emergency and Public Safety

6. Emergency and Public Safety Services (Beyond CBHSSJB)

The report frames youth protection as a **shared responsibility across systems**:

- **Recommendation #1** – Fire departments, ambulance services, public safety units, and police are all expected to be included in **mental-health support strategies for emergency responders**.



Sports and Recreation Departments

5. Sports, Recreation, and Youth Organizations

These are **non-health, non-governance community actors**:

- **Recommendation #31** – Local Sports and Recreation Departments, supported by the Eeyou Istchee Sports and Recreation Association, are asked to **expand youth activities** to promote positive engagement.



Quebec and Federal Government

7. Quebec and Federal Governments (Indirect but Explicit)

While not written as direct commands, the following recommendations **clearly implicate external governments**:

- **Recommendation #11** – Quebec is expected to engage with Cree authorities to ensure **flexible, culturally grounded application of YPA and YCJA**.
- **Multiple recommendations** (esp. on poverty, housing, income supports, land-based healing) implicitly require **provincial and federal funding alignment**, even when not named as lead actors.



Addendum B

Key Milestones 2012-2022



Key Milestones | 2012-2022

2012

- CDPDJ Investigation
- 2nd CBHSSJB Health Agreement

2016

Audit Report Recommendations

- RTS – Regional Emergency Reporting and Intake Services
- Accredited Training – Charlie Training & PCFI (Psychosocial Intervention with Children and Families) CIUSSS
- Equipping staff with tools (computers & client data system)
- Development positions and Team Lead clinical function role clarity

YPA amended to recognize kinship or customary care of indigenous children by family members or relatives, cultural identity considered during placement and the placement family and organization was expected to preserve that cultural identity

2017

- CBHSSJB By-Law on Youth Protection Services - A focus on Quality
- 2nd Audit focused on a portrait of first-line services and analysis of related services

2018

- Civil Code of Quebec – Customary Adoption & Customary Guardianship
- YP and CMC Collaboration Protocol

2019

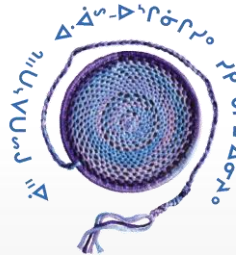
- 3rd CBHSSJB Health Agreement (ended March 2024)
- Youth Healing Services Policy & Procedure on Intensive Supervision
- Implementations: rules to sharing confidential information, working group with EEPF, Orientation, ASIST Training & TL supervision-case monitoring and intervention planning Training

2020

- MSSS initiation of revision for standards of practice from the 1988 development
- CSB-CBHSSJB joint provision of services – amended protocol (2016)
- Bill C-92 (Federal Law) affirms inherit right to govern YP services & establishes standards to apply services incl. under provincial law

2022

YPA amendments protections for exposure to domestic violence, updates on confidentiality, youth transition support etc.



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