



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**September 29, 2021**

### **Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth sign Terms of Reference with newly established Elder Advisory Council**

**SASKATOON** – The Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, Lisa Broda, and staff met on September 17, 2021, at Wanuskewin Heritage Park with their newly established Elder Advisory Council to sign its Terms of Reference.

“September 17<sup>th</sup> was a very important day for the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth office, as it marked the establishment of the first formal Elder Advisory Council in the history of the office,” said Broda. The Terms of Reference signing included traditional ceremony and teachings by the Elders to honour our relationship, and to set our path forward in a good way.

Broda stated, “Staff are keen to receive the benefits of the Elders’ wisdom and to gain deeper knowledge about their culture and traditions that will guide our work.”

Elder Julie Pitzel stated, “this will be our guide as we go on this journey together.” Elder Marg Reynolds added, “This Terms of Reference is so important for the Advocate’s office, but also for others who might follow, like upper government [...]. Elders come and give what they know - we all have different gifts.”

Several high-profile national events have called for more meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities on reconciliation including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the enactment of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, and the recently legislated *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

With six Council members representing the cultural and linguistic Indigenous groups from throughout the province, the formalization of the Council both operationalizes and demonstrates the Advocate’s commitment to reconciliation. “It has been important for my office to recognize that reconciliation is more than just talking about it, instead it means action toward engaging in a path forward to ensure we are building relationships with Indigenous communities. The Elder Council will help guide our work in doing our very best for Indigenous children who are highly over-represented in our child-serving systems,” said Broda.

Elder Gilbert Kewistep stated, “The number of [Indigenous] children in care is still too high. Things won’t change unless we do something about it. We need to think outside the box. I thank the Advocate for putting together the Elder Group [...] to make change. I know we can do it.”

Elder Darlene Speidel also said, “I’m humble to be a part of this advisory body [...] in order to provide the most appropriate service for these youth. We need to do it in a manner that’s culturally and linguistically appropriate for each of the children.”

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The Elders commended the Advocate for taking this step, and as stated by Elder Marg Reynolds, “I’m so proud that this is being done.”

The timing of the signing ceremony is significant as it has occurred just prior to September 30th, Canada’s first National Truth and Reconciliation Day. Staff plan to commemorate this special day, which honours residential school victims, survivors, and their families, through education and reflection, to consider the gravity of our past and how it continues to impact Indigenous communities.

“We are very excited and honoured to formally welcome the members of the Elder Advisory Council to our office. Our work and our path forward will be that much stronger as we receive their ongoing guidance and teaching not only for Indigenous children but for all children in Saskatchewan,” said Broda.



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