



**October 3, 2017**

### **Peel Children's Aid Apology to the Indigenous Community of the Region of Peel**

Peel CAS wishes to acknowledge that our child welfare organization, which has been in existence since 1912 and has been part of the ongoing history of Canada and Ontario, has a history of marginalization and cultural genocide in relation to the indigenous population of Canada and Ontario. The Premier of Ontario has officially apologized to Ontario's indigenous communities for the decades of mistreatment of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people by the provincial government. We recognize that we are mandated, legislated and controlled by the provincial government. To our community we are government.

From 1960 to the mid-1980s, significant numbers of indigenous families were impacted when children were apprehended and subsequently placed for adoption under provincial child welfare legislation after the federal government and the provincial government of Ontario agreed that the Province would take over child welfare responsibilities for indigenous children on reserves. This is making reference to what has been described as the Sixties Scoop. Peel Region does not have an indigenous reserve located within our geographical boundaries because the Southern Objibway peoples and the Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation were swindled out of their land. This unlawful action has since been recognized and validated with the court settlement of a lawsuit for damages relating to the unlawful expropriation of their reserve lands. This is the shameful history of the Region of Peel that Peel CAS shares; we recognize that our provision of child welfare services in the 1960s to the mid-1980s reflected the larger pattern of indigenous marginalization and oppression. Since the mid-1980s child protection has continued to separate indigenous families in a manner that has been described at the Millennium Scoop. At Peel CAS we are apologizing for our part in the ongoing oppression of indigenous families and our failure to be part of helping the indigenous community in the Region of Peel rebuild their community.

Peel CAS has been on a journey of growth and awareness that has seen our agency embrace the cultural diversity of the Region of Peel by rebuilding our workforce to represent that diversity. Our recognition of barriers of systemic oppression and racism has resulted in our agency embracing an anti-oppressive practice approach to provide child welfare services and support to our community. We believe that children belong at home and we strive do everything we can to keep families together. We work with parents, caregivers and other organizations to build a safe, strong community. Our goal is to make the lives of children, youth and families better through their interaction with us.

Peel Region has a culturally diverse population that includes many indigenous persons and families. We recognize that due to the long history of oppression, many indigenous persons have avoided self-identification to child welfare authorities. Peel CAS wishes to apologize to the indigenous population of the Region of Peel for our role and practices both in relation to the Sixties Scoop, and in relation to our ongoing practices.

Today Peel CAS pledges to work collaboratively with First Nations, Metis, Inuit and self-identifying indigenous families, with Peel Aboriginal Network Indigenous Friendship Center and with Credit River Metis Council to find ways to support and strengthen indigenous families within their communities and family circles. This apology from Peel CAS is just a small step in a journey of reconciliation.

In 2011 John Beaucage, Aboriginal Advisor to the Minister of Children and Youth Services found that “The child welfare system in Ontario is broken for Aboriginal children and youth and it must be fixed”. Peel CAS wants to be part of new ideas and innovative strategies that are developed collaboratively with the indigenous community in the Region of Peel.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada focused on honouring the truth and reconciling for the future. The path forward has not yet been constructed in the Region of Peel for child welfare and the indigenous community, but we want to listen to our community and work collaboratively to find ways to support our local indigenous community in their efforts to keep their children safe, and to strengthen families in a way that is focused on indigenous culture and safety.