

*Briefing Note*  
*Department of Health and Community Service*

**Issue:** A 13 year old girl is a victim of serious assault by a 21 year old male in Natuashish. The Child and Youth Advocate, Judge Wicks, has announced he is investigating the case.

**Background:**

- The girl was on the protection caseload of Health Labrador Corporation Child, Youth and Family Services (HLC - CYFS). HLC-CYFS became involved with this family to provide support to the girl for a previous assault experience.
- The girl moved to reside with her father in Sheshatshiu, however, due to his work commitments this could not be a long term option.
- The girl moved back to live with her mother in Natuashish in February 2004. The mother had made serious and successful steps towards sobriety and stability in her life.
- The last contact the social worker had with the girl and her mother was on March 29, 2004, just prior to the labour dispute. The situation was assessed as going well.
- On Thursday June 3, 2004 the girl presented to the clinic in Natuashish. Given the seriousness of her injuries, she went by medivac to the Labrador Health Center in Goose Bay.
- In an interview with police she disclosed that she was living in a tent with a 21 year old male for approximately three weeks and had been physically and sexually assaulted. She also advised a 3 year child, her first cousin, had resided with them and was physically assaulted by the male.
- On June 3, 2004 the Director of Child, Youth and Family Services HLC

was notified of the situation. An immediate investigation commenced.

- HLC-CYFS determined that the 3 year old had been living with the mother of the 13 year old. The 3 year old is now with her birth mother and will be residing there until a full assessment can be completed. The 3 year old was medically examined and found to be healthy.
- HLC-CYFS is completing an investigation to determine the 13 year old mother's awareness of the situation and her role in protecting both children. They are limited in their efforts because the Innu Community Service Worker, who supports the social workers from a language and cultural perspective, has not returned to work since successfully securing a position on the Band Council in the recent elections.
- On June 4, 2004, HLC-CYFS was successful in obtaining a telewarrant to legally remove the 13 year old girl from her mother's care.
- The girl has been sent to the Janeway Hospital for treatment. HLC-CYFS arranged for the father to accompany the girl to St. John's. Given the concern and ongoing investigation into the mother's role in protecting these children, it was determined that she not accompany the girl to St. John's.
- The Innu Band Council in Natuashish is concerned about this decision and paid for the mother to go to St. John's to be with the girl. The Innu Chief has expressed his displeasure to HLC and stated he may consider asking the social workers to leave the community.
- The male has been charged and remanded in custody for psychiatric assessment and sentence hearing. He plead guilty.

**Current Status:**

- HLC-CYFS, jointly with the police, are completing an investigation of the child protection needs of all of the children residing with the mother of

this 13 year old. The plan will be further defined to respond to the assessed needs.

- On June 11, CBC released a news report advising that Judge Lloyd Wicks, the province's child advocate, is investigating how authorities failed to protect this girl. He is launching an investigation before the RCMP finishes its work because "there are too many disturbing questions". Judge Wicks stated: "a way has to be found to change the circumstances in which the Innu live, and in so doing, break what is a cycle of violence and a culture of silence".
- HLC is conducting an internal review of this case to assess whether appropriate action was taken. Boyd Rowe, CEO, is making a media statement today. He will indicate that contrary to the statements of Mr. George Rich, at no time were authorities contacted with respect to this case. HLC will fully support and cooperate with the Child Advocate's Office during this investigation.
- HLC will inform the Department of any further developments.

**Key Messages:**

- Our priority concern is to ensure the protection and safety of all children in the province.
- HLC will be fully cooperating with Judge Wicks in his investigation of this case.
- HLC's Director of Child & Family Services has initiated action to take the children into care.
- It would be inappropriate to discuss any further details or specifics of this case.

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