

# ***100 YEARS OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES IN SASKATCHEWAN: A SURVEY***

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*“Dwell on the past and you lose one eye; forget the past and you lose two eyes.” — Russian Proverb*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The year 2009 marks 100 years since the initial implementation of child welfare programs and services in Saskatchewan in 1909 following the first child welfare Legislation — The Children’s Protection Act of 1908. Triple digit anniversaries are times to recall the road traveled and learn from the remembering. With this in mind the SASW presents a survey of child welfare history in Saskatchewan.

In all respects this is a survey of the most readily available material on the history of child welfare in Saskatchewan. The authors have made no extraordinary attempts to unearth new material or to be comprehensive and make no claim to rigorous scholarship. One example of this is the limiting of footnotes. Only the more extensive excerpts from the major sources listed in the bibliography are credited. Brief borrowings from these and other sources are not credited, though most can be easily deduced by the reader. Excerpts from obvious sources — legislation and publicly available government documents are not footnoted.

We have resisted — not always successfully — negative criticism of past policies and decisions. Occasionally an opinion or analysis of policies and events is offered but our primary intent is always balanced reporting. We are career social workers who have participated in about half the 100 years of child welfare activity in this province. We report our experience and comment on what seems significant to us from a perusal of the available record.

There are gaps, and likely errors, in reporting and some events described and analyzed at length will be considered by some to be of less significance than those treated summarily or not at all. The authors ask for and welcome assistance in addressing these failings. They regard this a communal work-in-progress and will be pleased to amend or addend the story with input from readers. They will be especially pleased to hear from any who retain memories of those times and are able to add fact or anecdotes that enliven the record. Anyone with information or opinion about what could be included is invited to contact the authors who are prepared — even eager— to revise or include. Comments from readers will be published on this website along with response to the comments by the authors.

Child welfare is a complex subject and there is no straightforward approach to recording its history, to selecting events from the past, to judging their significance in relation to others, or to shaping analyses. Similarly, there is no consensus on either a description of the path taken or a prescription for the best direction to venture into the future. Everyone with an interest in child welfare seems to have a strong opinion on every issue: members of the public claim to know, sometimes swagger in their certainty, rant, praise, condemn — politicians, promise, backtrack, spin, blame, reward, sometimes get it right, make progress — the media reports, under-reports, over-reports — agencies posture for influence, money to run their programs — the helping

professions advocate, waffle, defend, promote, protest, complain, while their individual members do their best and fall prostrate from fatigue. “Clients” wait and wonder why — a few, we hope, survive and thrive. All this while troubled families multiply, parents falter and more children come into the care of government agencies.

The history of child welfare in Saskatchewan shows periodic swings of increased demand for and innovation in child welfare services and growth in the number of children coming into care followed by periods of slow growth, even decline in numbers — in demand for action followed by public and political apathy. Currently there is mounting eagerness throughout the western world to discover new ways to understand and address these pendulum swings which seem to be felt in every jurisdiction. This, in our opinion, is the central and most critical challenge to child welfare and cries out for new ways of thinking and for attitude change along with vigorous innovative action. Yet there will always be doubt and the need for a bit of luck. We must ensure that our decisions are based more on knowledge, courage and wisdom and less on the kind of arbitrariness purportedly suggested by the great New York Yankees catcher Yogi Berra “ When you come to a fork in the road — take it.” Remembering and attempting to understand the past is a key requisite to making the best decisions possible about the future.

*\* Child welfare can be broadly defined to include any measure that promotes the well-being of children — educational, medical, social welfare, etc. In this survey we focus more narrowly on child welfare Services which we understand to be — services created to carry out the provincial legislation designed to protect and promote the well-being of children. There have been four specific Acts of the Saskatchewan legislature passed over the last 100 years that were designed to do this .Those acts and the services engendered by them are the subject of this survey.*

*\*\* In reporting events of the past we have chosen, in most cases, to use the language of the period rather than translate terms into current “politically correct” usage or convert to the new acronyms. We think this helps convey the spirit and thinking of the time. Additionally we have reported the earlier history in more detail under the assumption that most readers will be well informed about recent years and are more interested in the early history.*

*\*\*\*. Except for a brief paragraph under “Residential Schools,” we have not attempted to include record of child welfare Services provided by the Federal Government to First Nations people on reserves as part of this survey.*

## **PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS**

Prior to passing the first child welfare legislation, protection of children was mainly the concern of extended families, religious and volunteer community groups, local governments and occasionally, law enforcement personnel. The earliest efforts to care for children in jeopardy implicitly acknowledged poverty as a major factor in child neglect and abuse and addressed it with acts of charity, work for welfare and institutional care. Though in many quarters of society there was also a prevailing moralistic view that families brought misery upon themselves through their own bad behavior and lack of industry — even poor genetic endowment. The help accorded the poor, neglected and abused was often judgmental, extended with reluctance and with stringent conditions. In this sense society persisted in endorsing the moral tone set by the English poor laws in the 500 years prior to the beginning of the welfare state in the early twentieth century.

Roman Law: based on *patrius patraie* i.e. the father rules over all his property, including women and children. Our society still shows effects of centuries of white, male privilege and dominance. (1)

Old Testament: "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Many parents are still guided by this admonition in their child rearing.

English Common Law: influenced all areas community action in the new world. One of its prime tenets was that the state stood as *parens patriae* (state is the ultimate parent) and has final responsibility for children. Rights of parents derive from and are conditional upon performance of their duties. Compared to practice at the time in many other countries this could be considered an enlightened approach. (1)

Community action: individuals or groups acting on religious beliefs or traditional communal practice often stepped in to rescue children in abusive or neglectful families. These services usually followed a charity model, which meant the service was given because it was considered to be morally the right thing to do and benefited the soul of the giver rather than out of a belief in the individual's inherent worth, dignity and right to receive it.

Groups arose to address cruelty to animals: ironically these were organized earlier than were services to prevent cruelty to children. These groups found themselves extending their concern to abused and neglected children. For example, the American Humane Society, formed to rescue donkeys from the Grand Canyon and later to prevent cruelty to animals more generally, extended its interest in abuse to children in jeopardy in the United States in the late nineteenth century.

The White House conference of 1909 in the USA recommended that children should not be removed from their homes because of poverty alone. This recommendation was generally accepted in Canada with the effect of implementing various income assistance programs for families. (1)

Generally, the earliest concerns were for what was most visible to the public eye. What happened privately was often considered the family's own business.

More recently child-centered practice, the idea that children should have first claim on a country's resources, the United Nations Convention On Rights of the Child and involvement of First Nations governments with their cultural attitudes toward children and family, have influenced child welfare legislation in Saskatchewan, as elsewhere.

## ANNOTATED TIME LINE

1867 — The British North America Act assigns exclusive powers to provincial legislators in the establishment, maintenance and management of hospitals, asylums, charities, eleemosynary services (supported by charities), for the province and generally in all matters of a merely local or private nature. This implies provincial responsibility for social

welfare programs beyond those supplied by private charity and municipal organizations. The Dominion government retains jurisdiction over Indians but assumes no responsibility for public welfare. At the time of Confederation the poor, the aged and the handicapped, widows and orphans are considered the responsibility of local and private organizations. (2)

The division of powers as set out in the BNA is a critical factor in the development of welfare and family services in Canada. Its impact cannot be over-estimated. Federal Government cost sharing for Provincial social services, equalization payments to provinces and the never-ending jurisdictional disputes and jockeying with regard to welfare services to aboriginal peoples will be a direct outcome of this legislation, and still a contentious area 142 years later.

1893 — Ontario enacts child welfare legislation — “An Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to and Better Protection of Children” — and becomes the first Province with a law to protect children from neglect and abuse. The Ontario Act is modeled after the Child Protection Act of New York State (following earlier legislation in Australia and Britain) and stresses punishment for abusive and neglectful parents. (1)

1905 — Saskatchewan enters Confederation. Until this date Saskatchewan is part of the Northwest Territories.

1908 — Three years after joining Confederation the newly formed province (population approximately 270,000) enacts its first child welfare legislation: The Children Protection Act — “an Act for the Better Protection of Neglected and Dependent Children” — clearly modeled after the Ontario child protection legislation. The Act sets out the structure for a public organization whose duty it is to protect neglected and dependent children. In the following year S. Spenser Page is appointed the first Superintendent and begins to establish programs and services.(2)

The purpose of the new act as stated in the duties of the Superintendent is: "to encourage and assist in the organization and establishment in various parts of the province of societies for the protection of children from neglect or cruelty, and for the due care of neglected and abandoned children in temporary homes or shelters and the placing of such children in properly selected foster homes" (2)

1908 -1911 — Children's Aid Societies are established in Regina (1908), Saskatoon (1909), Moose Jaw (1912), Humboldt, Kamsack, Moosomin, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Qu'Appelle, Maple Creek, Weyburn, Yorkton, Indian Head, Melville, Estevan and Carlyle. Of these, the three in the largest urban areas effectively provide parallel services to those of the Bureau of Child Protection. Simultaneously, The Bureau of Child Protection is formed to serve those areas of the province not served by private societies. Additionally, Regina, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw operate children's shelters which are subsidized by municipal budgets. These shelters are also used as temporary homes for children from rural areas committed to the care of the Superintendent. The province pays for the accommodation at the rate of \$2.50 per week per child. (2) Some of the names of the shelters echo into later

years: Kilburn Hall in Saskatoon, Embury House in Regina, St. Patrick's Orphanage in Prince Albert. These shelters are also used to house youth classified as Juvenile Delinquents for up to three months rather than send them to an Industrial School, which would mean "out of province," as such a facility does not exist in Saskatchewan at this time. It is clearly the intention of the government of the day to have local governments and the private sector take the lead in providing child protection services. (2)

While the idea of Children's Aid Societies with local responsibility works well in industrialized Ontario, the newly formed Children's Aid Societies in Saskatchewan will struggle administratively from inception. Saskatchewan will eventually discover that given its sparse rural population, small urban centers, lack of a comprehensive transportation system and a predominately agricultural economy, a comprehensive system of Children's Aid Societies is unsuitable and often impossible to implement.(2)

The second major focus of the 1908 Child Protection Act is to define by statute a child in need of protection. When reading the criteria, one must remember that this is the Province's first attempt at dealing with a very complex and sensitive issue and that the culture of the time influences the choice of concerns to be addressed and the language employed in addressing them. The Act includes seven categories of neglect: a child who is begging; who is wandering about at night and sleeping in the open; who is associating with a thief or drunkard or vagrant and allowed to grow up without salutary parental control; who lives in any disorderly house or in the company of reputed criminal or immoral or disorderly people; who is a destitute orphan deserted by lawful parents or guardians; who is guilty of petty crimes and likely to develop criminal tendencies; who is habitually truant from school. A child is deemed to be any person actually or apparently under the age of sixteen years.

Within 24 hours of "apprehending" under any of the above provisions a child must be brought before a Judge for a hearing. The child's parents have the right to attend the hearing and state their case. The Judge can dismiss the case or commit the child to the Superintendent or to a Children's Aid Society.

In a bulletin issued in 1911 the minister responsible for Child Protection, W.R. Motherwell states: "Humanness demands that proper treatment be insured all children and the material interests of the province give added reason for the action, since the neglect of children will mean unfortunate and perhaps criminal habits of life when the boys and girls have reached maturity."(2)

1913 — The Act is amended to compel Judges to make an order of maintenance against the municipality for the care of children who come into the care of the Superintendent from their jurisdiction. A second amendment allows towns and cities to provide temporary detention homes. This plan seems intended to provide intermediary care for juvenile offenders and avoid admission to an Industrial Schools out of province. (2)

In 1913 the entire Child Welfare expenditure totals \$16,000. Of this, \$8000 is for services for children.

The Government encourages Children's Aid Societies to take responsibility for children, thereby lowering the direct cost to the province. The Government also promotes foster care for children rather than institutional care. The foster care program includes free homes for the younger children (no foster care payments) and wage homes for older children where they work for a wage. In effect, the actual cost of keeping children in foster care is minimal. Paying foster parents for care is still in the distant future.

Newspaper publicity is used to recruit foster homes. Application for foster care must be in written form accompanied by at least two references, one of which must be from clergy. Preference is given to childless couples or couples who have only one child who is lonely and in need of companionship. There is a written agreement which requires regular school attendance for the foster child, inspection of the home and right of the Superintendent to remove the child without notice. (2)

The lack of agency personal contact with, or supervision of, the home is evident, but not surprising given the transportation difficulties of the time.(3)

Wage homes for older children differ. While requiring the foster parent to provide the child with kind treatment, board, lodging, washing, clothing, and necessaries, the foster parent must pay the Society or Superintendent a small wage. This money is held in trust for the child until he or she reaches the age of discretion. The exploitation of children as a source of cheap labor is always a concern.

As of December 31, 1913, 457 children are in the care of the Superintendent or Society. 294 of these are placed in foster homes. An additional 47 are in homes outside the province, presumably living with relatives. The remainder is likely in shelters or Industrial Schools. During this time, 222 visits are made to foster homes and it is found to not be practicable to visit 74 cases. Many of these are apparently out of province, married or have absconded and not been located. (2)

Further statistics for this period indicate that out of the 457 children in care, 106 children are placed with relatives. (3)

## **THE GRAY BOOKS**

1910-1922— The Bureau tracks children coming into care and their placement through entries in the "Gray Books," — so called because they are gray in color. They were large tomes especially designed for the purpose of showing the categories of information to be recorded. They were designed by the Bureau and produced locally by the Leader Post Printing Services. Recording is sparse, the language terse — a few lines under each of the categories on the two pages allotted for each child. Few, if any details are provided concerning the reasons for coming into care, though the section of the Act relevant to the situation is usually quoted and sometimes other reasons are noted in using well established phrases. e.g. "suffered to grow up without salutary parental control and education or in circumstances exposing such children to an idle desolate life". (This last citation is the most common); "mother dead; father deserted"; "was in peril of life and health by continued

personal injury”; “in a state of constant vagrancy”; “guilty of a petty crime and is likely to develop criminal tendencies”, “disorderly house”; “mother leading an immoral life”. (3)

Very brief note is made of annual visits – or attempts to make them. A sticker signals that the annual visit has been completed, another indicates no further visits are required, a third indicates the need for further visits. Very rarely is there elaboration. Finally an entry is made when the record is closed and the reason noted (usually, again, without elaboration) — “turned 21”; “absconded”; “married”; “died”; “enlisted”; “left the country”. (3) Moose Jaw CAS uses a similar method of recording for a time — it is assumed that other CASs do also.

The Gray Books show the best efforts of the era, made by sincere employees and volunteers, attempting to address a recognized social situation. The language is more legalistic and judgmental than will be expected of trained social workers 30 years hence who will be steeped in the teachings of psychoanalysis, sociology, psychology and casework. The entries are brief in the extreme. Sometimes there is a photograph included, other times a brief personal note that gives some insight into the care given and a personal concern shown for these children. In one case, a poem by the child is included, in another a statement by the inspector that he would consider this child the perfect child to adopt if he was an adopting parent.

## **ANNOTATED TIME LINE (continued)**

By 1915, seven years after the implementation of the first Child Protection Act, the staff the government employs to administer the child welfare program includes the Superintendent, an Assistant Superintendent, an Inspector, four stenographers and one clerk. (2)

During the first 12 years cases referred to the Superintendent for investigation include: cruelty, neglect and children believed to be living in immoral conditions. Field staff investigate each referral and report to the Superintendent, who may, if evidence warrants, issue instructions for a court hearing. Up until 1919, 5146 cases are investigated and 1713 children are committed to ward care. There is no record of support services, if any, being made available for the children remaining in their own homes.(2)

Locating foster homes remains a priority. Protestant children are placed in Protestant homes and Catholic children in Catholic homes. Children designated non-Christian are considered to be Protestant and are placed in Protestant homes. The need for children to attend school regularly is strongly impressed on foster parents, apparently, in part, to protect the children from labor exploitation. It is reported that foster homes are inspected regularly and the results reported to the superintendent. Smith (3) observes that given the many circumstances to the contrary it is doubtful that the government agency was able to carry out the commendable policies outlined. The demand for older boys and girls to do chores is unlimited. The Annual Report in 1915 states: “We have no men and women to hire out. We have boys and girls for whom we want homes.” Forty-seven children are placed in wage homes in 1912 compared to 183 in similar placements in 1915. The war, conscription and

the resulting shortage of adult farm labour may be contributing to a decrease in placing wards in employment. (2)

1917 — Juvenile court is established to hear cases under the Juvenile Delinquents Act.

1918 — The Mothers' Pensions Act is passed and the first Mothers' Allowance payments are made under the administration of the Superintendent of Child Welfare.

## MOTHERS ALLOWANCE

*"The Mothers' Allowance program was first introduced as a protective measure for children"*  
- Millie Battel (4)

The Mothers' Pensions Act of 1918 (Mothers' Allowance) is an attempt to preserve the family unit by subsidizing income of mothers unable to provide financially for their children. The eligibility requirements include two years residency in Canada, beginning with the year immediately preceding the application; to have one or more children under the age of sixteen years for whom, by reason of poverty, the mother is unable to provide; the mother must be a widow whose husband has died in the province, or whose husband is an inmate of a prison, a sanatorium, a home for incurables, or whose husband is permanently incapacitated. Guardians of orphans or foster mothers who are widows or single women are also eligible to receive the allowance if they meet the residence and the means test requirements. The provincial government bears the full cost of this allowance without reliance on contributions from municipalities. (2)

During the depression years the basis for granting Mothers' Allowance is adjusted. A set rate is paid according to the number of children dependent on the mother. The Mothers' Allowance is meant only to supplement the financial assistance grant paid by the municipality; it isn't intended that the entire cost be borne by the provincial treasury. (2)

Unfortunately, the legislation contains phrases such as "fit and proper mother," and "permanently incapacitated father." This leads to many negative interpretations, particularly if the mother has an illegitimate child or is addicted to alcohol. These criteria lead to judgment-laden decisions and provide the municipal councils with a hammer to punish what they deem to be immoral behavior.(2)

During the 30s the number of mothers receiving the allowance increases and continues to do so until the early war years when employment opportunities for females increases and older sons or daughters assign their military pay directly to their mothers. Again, the Province sees the dependent child as their only responsibility and looks to the municipality to meet the needs of the mother or incapacitated father.(2)

During this period the Bureau adopts a policy of accepting an illegitimate child as a ward of the Superintendent before arranging adoption placement if the unmarried mother wishes to surrender her child. When a mother decides to keep her child the Bureau's policy is to try to assist her by establishing the paternity and financial responsibility of the putative father. However, some changes in policies by the federal agencies such as the Department of Pensions and National Health decision to provide maintenance to pregnant armed forces women and the Federal Dependent Allowance Board decision to grant a regular allowance to the common law wives of enlisted men on the same basis as in legal marriages, begin to give some credibility to the common law union.(2)

In 1945 the eligibility rules determining who is eligible for Mothers' Allowance are broadened to include guardians — usually relatives — where children have formed a bond and are receiving good care.

In 1944 the Federal Family Allowance Program is established and during 1945-46 the Department reorganizes the Mothers' Allowance program and transfers it from Child Care Branch to the Social Aid Branch.

#### **ANNOTATED TIME LINE (continued)**

1918 (circa) — Social Aid, Family Allowance and Aid to Dependent Families Allowance are other early financial assistance programs that have as their main objective a contribution to the care and safety of children in impoverished circumstances. Significantly, this is an early recognition of the link between poverty and child neglect and abuse.

By 1918 the Superintendent's duties are extended to include responsibility for administration of the Mothers' Allowance Program. In 1923 they are further extended to include the Adoption Act. From the original Child Protection Act in 1908, the Superintendent is now responsible for five pieces of legislation including the Juvenile Court Act and the Federal Juvenile Delinquent Act. (2)

1923-1926 – this report from the bureau on categories of referral for each of 4 years offers insight into the way the Bureau understands and characterizes the work it is doing. Of particular significance is the increasing number of “illegitimate” children cases the bureau is handling at this time and the apparent growth in activities characterized as “case work.” — adjusting family disputes. The category “immoral surroundings” is apparently on decline — perhaps being subsumed by casework?

REFERRAL OF CASES TO BUREAU, 1923 -1926				
Reasons for Referral	1923	1924	1925	1926
Domestic trouble	139	88	74	93
Cruelty of parents	85	30	10	16
Immoral surroundings	104	120	65	54
Alleged willful neglect	199	233	118	103
Parents deserted	48	73	19	30
Parents dead	12	12	0	0
Parents insane	14	13	6	8
Illegitimate children	57	25	48	100
Adjusting family disputes (case work)	0	0	51	48
Source; Annual reports, B.C.P. Regina ( <i>Ministry archives</i> ) (2)				

1926 — By this year the Provincial Government employs, six men and three women in the field. The initial responsibility of staff is the supervision of wards placed in foster homes. By 1930 this responsibility is expanded to include: (1) Investigating domestic trouble in the homes of children. (2) ‘Adjusting trouble’ between foster parents and the Commissioner regarding wards who are behaviour problems. (3) Investigating referrals of cruelty and neglect by natural parents. (4) Visiting wards in foster homes regularly. (5) Prosecuting adults when warranted and attending court when child welfare was concerned. (6) Committing neglected children to wardship. (7) Investigating willful neglect and desertion. (8) Negotiating settlements with putative fathers of children born out of wedlock. (9) Escorting children to and from foster homes. (10) Case finding and escorting the deaf, blind, and feeble-minded children to schools. (11) Inspecting prospective foster homes. (12) Investigating applicants for Mothers Allowance. (13) Regular inspection of homes where Mothers Allowance is in pay. (14) In-office interviews with people requiring information and assistance to adjust their ‘troubles.’ (15) Attending conferences with municipal councils.

The 1929 total budget is \$106,000. Total number of children in care in 1930 is 1565. (2)

1926 — The foster boarding home, where foster parents are paid to care for children, is used for the first time. By 1930 the number of these placements has doubled. The program administrator expresses caution about the use of subsidized foster homes with the potential hazard of “baby farming.” Up to this point all foster homes have been either free or wage homes.

1927— The Children's Protection Act, The Mothers Pensions Act, The Adoption of Children Act and the Juvenile Courts Act are consolidated into The Child Welfare Act. Additionally the act makes provision for care of "feeble-minded" and "mentally defective" children and a better provision for the children of unmarried parents. This can be viewed as

a recognition on the part of government of the inter-relatedness of services to children — how one service has a direct bearing on the provision and administration of another.

1927-28 — In his report for this fiscal year the Superintendent describes the activities of the Bureau as follows: (1) Receiving and committing neglected and dependent children as wards. (2) Home finding and child placing in free homes. (3) Authorizing and arranging juvenile court hearings in rural districts. (4) Inspecting applications for Mothers Allowance and re-inspecting those in pay. (5) Preparing material for making recommendations with regard to legal adoptions. (6) Case finding and arranging treatment of feeble-minded and mentally defective children. (7) Providing services to children of unmarried parents. (8) Case finding and arranging education for deaf and blind children in schools outside of the province. (2)

Methods involved in administering these services are identified as: family case work, study and advice: clinical methods in child behaviour study; prosecutions, both adult and juvenile; domestic relations adjusted.

From this one sees the seeds of developing a professional attitude towards service and the need for a special body of knowledge to deal with these complex issues. The use of the term “family casework,” may be the first recorded reference to social work as a profession – in later reports of the Bureau the term “social casework” appears frequently .

In rural areas where Children’s Aid Societies do not exist, the appointment of Child Welfare Committees are encouraged. This supports the policy of promoting local responsibility and by 1929 twenty-three such committees are in existence. Children’s Aid Societies in Regina, Moose Jaw and Saskatoon continue to function. (2)

Some municipalities see the Bureau and Children’s Aid Societies as convenient dumping grounds for troublesome children and difficult families. The Superintendent expresses the hope that local committees will assume more responsibility for a solution to these problems and relieve the Bureau staff of the increasing stress of providing services to a widely dispersed population. (2)

Throughout these early years there is a philosophical struggle between the central government on the one hand, and Municipal Governments and local Children’s Aid Societies on the other, that arises out of differing views on who is responsible for the provision of Child Protection and related services. The Provincial Government remains reluctant to assume full control, pursuing a policy of deferring to the private sector and local community wherever possible, while the Municipal Governments feel that being closest to the scene they must shape and control services to their citizens. A major facet of this struggle concerns apportioning the burden of financing the service.

1930's — The great depression has a brutal impact on welfare services in Saskatchewan. By 1937 seventy percent of the population is on relief. Government programs are curtailed and budgets slashed, child welfare programs among them. This results in more reliance on the private agencies and less government supervision. The Prince Albert Children’s Aid Society

is incorporated in 1931 and the Yorkton society in 1934. Many of the Societies established in 1908 are completely inactive, the Bureau assuming responsibilities for providing services to children. (2)

At this time child welfare legislation stipulates that all cities with a population of 10,000 or more shall have Incorporated Children's Aid Societies. Child Welfare Committees are established in the smaller communities of Biggar, Assiniboia, Estevan, Humboldt, Melfort, Melville, North Battleford, Shaunavon, Swift Current, Tisdale, and Weyburn. The Child Welfare Committees have three main functions: to act as probation officers when juveniles are in court, providing used clothing to families in need and building an informed public opinion on child welfare matters.

Recognition grows during this time of the need for staff with special knowledge and skills. This prompts the Commissioner to comment: "only workers either of long experience or previous social work training, are capable of obtaining the best results." Additionally, there is recognition there are no easy ways to deal with children in need of protection and that the good intentions and common sense of service providers is not enough. This heralds a growing interest in employing trained workers on the staff of public welfare departments.

Of the children in care from 1931-1938 seventy-eight percent are wards of the Bureau, the remainder are wards of the five Children's Aid Societies. The major responsibility for neglected and dependent children now rests with the public agency. Given the rural nature of the province, this trend will continue. During the depression the number of children in free homes declines from 1050 to 489 in 1938, a reflection of the financial problems of the decade. On the other hand, the number of wards placed in paid boarding homes increases from sixty-nine in 1931 to 112 in 1938. It is during this period that a larger number of Metis children come into care and the Bureau finds it difficult to find placements for them in white foster homes. (2)

1931— In his report the Commissioner lists the advantages of boarding home care:

- . A home is a more natural environment for the child
- . The child moves more easily from a paid foster home to a free home
- . Foster parents and neighbors take a liking to the child, and the ward moves from a paid home to a free home
- . There is less chance of quarantine if large numbers of children are in foster homes rather than grouped in institutions.
- . Boarding home care is less expensive than institutional care.(2)

Wards beyond school age are placed in work homes. These are foster homes supervised by the Bureau. It is not possible for most employees to earn more than their board and clothing.

While child welfare services have a primary focus on the protection of children, there is also an implicit onus on the agency to support the family of that child. In the early 1930s the policy of providing family supports to avoid the removal of children is enunciated as a Bureau objective. This requires the co-operation of a multitude of community resources,

particularly, municipal governments. The Bureau exerts heavy pressure on the municipalities to get help to families. It may not be simply reluctance to do so, on the part of municipalities. They are also faced with the reality of meager financial resources. The challenge for the Bureau is how to get financial support to these families without making the children wards of the province. Mothers Allowance is one such way, but the financial assistance for two parent families remains with the municipality.

1938 — Records of meetings of the Regina CAS in 1938 show statistics for the year 1936 where 195 children are committed and 188 discharged from The Home On Winnipeg (Street), the shelter operated by the Society. The average daily number of children that year is 49.1 and the cost per day of care per child is 64 cents. Another interesting feature of these CAS meetings is that is during the meetings the volunteer board makes their decisions to consent to the adoption of children in their care. (MSS archives)

1939 — With the outbreak of WW II it is agreed that distribution and care of evacuee children from the danger zones in Great Britain to Canada will be handled by existing child welfare structures. Each province undertakes responsibility for the entire care needs of children in its area. A special appeal is made through the press to Saskatchewan residents to open their homes. In 1942 a total of 101 children from Great Britain are placed in Saskatchewan.

1940 — The Bureau of Child Protection operates throughout the province with 14 field staff carrying generalized caseloads. 6-7 of the staff are based in Regina and work on child welfare cases exclusively. At this time The Bureau is administered by the Minister of Highways. Local Child Welfare Committees are being formed to act in child welfare situations where chartered societies are not providing service.

Deficiencies in service begin to become apparent in the early 1940's as the understanding of the causes of social problems increases and with progressive policies and programs being implemented in other jurisdictions. There is a realization that child welfare services offered by the government agencies are superficial and inadequate, lagging behind the programs offered in other parts of Canada and USA. The confusion between the Bureau programs and those of the Children's Aid Societies must be addressed, as well as the involvement or lack of it of the regional welfare committees. The CAS in Yorkton disbands due to the lack of funding, while the CAS in Prince Albert is operating poorly and is not being able to hire a director. The Saskatoon CAS advocates an independent provincial review which is not realized. Some of these problems may be alleviated with direct government grants to these societies, but such funds will have strings attached and are therefore not realized. (2)

There is a renewed emphasis on professional staff for the Bureau during this period. Two new social workers are added and there is emphasis on training. At this time University of Manitoba offers a one year course in social work. New appointments to staff are made on the condition that once familiar with their work and having made a career choice, they will secure formal training. A brief submitted to the Minister in 1942 criticizes the lack of training and unprogressive attitudes. It stresses the need for trained employees in all aspects

of the service and recommends the Bureau be placed under competent administration. Over the previous 30 years most appointments have been made by political patronage.(2)

During WW II stress on the Bureau increases. The needs of families of armed service personnel are a new burden for the Bureau. Additionally, the Metis population is increasing and the number of Metis children coming into care is of mounting concern. (2,3)

The volume of new work increases. The Bureau already has seventy-seven percent of the cases when Yorkton CAS folds and Prince Albert CAS and Moose Jaw CAS continue to struggle.

It is recognized that there is a lack of psychiatric care for children, child guidance services, training and correctional services for girls.

A need for extensive re-organization of child welfare services and administration continues to be expressed in several quarters.

1940 — Federal Government passes the Unemployment Insurance Act. As Canada moves out of the depression this is viewed as a move to further safeguard the future of families and the well-being of children.

1943— The Regina CAS is the first to employ a trained social worker. Later in the same year the Bureau hires its first trained social worker.

1944 – The provincial election in this year is a watershed event for the development of social services in Saskatchewan. The new government brings a vision that emphasizes the value of all individuals and acknowledges the right of every Saskatchewan resident to a decent standard of living, including basic health, education and social services. (4)

The rights of children are acknowledged and the family is recognized as the basic unit of society. Additionally if parents fail in their responsibilities, and efforts to assist the family fail, the state is expected to provide a substitute environment to meet basic needs and foster normal growth and development of children.(2)

The war years also bring a change of emphasis in the foster home system. There is an increase in paid boarding homes. There is an accumulation of wards not suitable for adoption placement, and the number of foster homes is diminishing because employment opportunities offered in war industries continue to be more lucrative. The child welfare administration is forced to raise rates in order to maintain its cadre of homes.

As well, there is a change in attitude in the ward population. They are gravitating to the cities rather than engaging in farm work and more are opting for a higher education. An era of a more individualized approach to child care is dawning. Three fundamental needs of children — for security, affection, and achievement — are given a degree recognition, in planning the future of each ward. (2)

1944 — The Department of Reconstruction, Labor and Social Welfare is created and the Child Welfare Branch assumes the work of the Bureau of Child Protection. The Branch also administers the Education of Blind and Deaf Children Act and payment of Mothers Allowance. It has its own field staff and supervises the operation of the Industrial School for Boys. The service to unmarried mothers is a major responsibility of the new Child Welfare Branch.

Front-end support services to families are developed and strengthened through private agencies that are active in Moose Jaw, Regina and Saskatoon. The Child Welfare Branch is keenly aware of the significance of keeping children in their own homes and considers wardship a last resort.(4)

1945 — The child welfare legislation is amended to allow temporary committal of a child to the Minister as well as permanent committal. This change is introduced to give families the opportunity to work out issues and protect the child. The Act also provides for a less intrusive form of intervention where through a voluntary care agreement between parents and Department a child can be taken into care and guardianship rights stay in tact.

1946 — Almost 1500 families are referred to the Child Welfare Branch. There is an explosion of expressed need. Staff can only deal with families on an emergency basis and are able to maintain only superficial contact. There is a recognized need for better and more accessible services.

1946 — "The Child Welfare Act" is enacted.

A central feature of the new act is the outlining of services to unmarried parents. Legislation covering services to unmarried mothers dates back to May, 1927. The legislation provides the means for obtaining financial support from the putative father for the maintenance of a child born out of wedlock and if the father is in default the legislation outlines the punishments.

In order to obtain financial support the mother must attempt to procure financial support from the father of her child. In only five percent of the cases of unmarried parents known to the Bureau from 1928 until 1930 do the parents marry and provide a home for their child. (2) Thirty-one per cent of unmarried mothers keep their children. Another fifteen per cent arrange privately for their care in boarding homes or institutions. Forty-three per cent of the children born out of wedlock during this period are committed to the care of a child welfare agency where the unmarried mothers relinquish all rights. These statistics aptly illustrate the mores of Saskatchewan society and the state of services available at the time.

The child protection legislation provides for the voluntary surrender of a child to the Superintendent or Children Aid Society for unmarried mothers who were unwilling or unable to maintain their child. The services to the mothers, their children and the fathers reflect the attitudes of the time. The children of out of wedlock unions are branded as illegitimate. Services to the mothers, while deemed necessary, are more often than not provided grudgingly and with a judgmental attitude. The father is known as the putative

father and shares the stigma of his parenthood with the mother and the child. He is at least recognized as having some responsibility, particularly financially in supporting the child.

In the mid 1940's the need to move services to unmarried parents from one based upon moral judgments to one of assistance to the parents begins to be realized by the emphasis on assisting the mother to make sound decisions for herself and her child. Casework services become available for the women, who for the lack of other services usually reside in one of the existing maternity homes. It is no longer simply assumed that the best plan is for the mother to give up her child. Rather an effort is made to honor her preference.

Mothers Allowance legislation is also amended in order to make financial support to the mother more available in the event she decides to keep her child.

In order to make committal of her child less traumatic, child welfare legislation is amended so a child committed to the care of the Minister is not deemed a neglected child. The new provision reads that a child be committed if the parent is unwilling or unable to maintain the child. (2,4)

The Child Welfare Act of 1945 spells out services to unmarried parents more substantially — financial, counseling and placement for adoption. This is considered a bold step countering the old prejudices against giving birth to illegitimate children. The Department is notified of all babies registered to an unmarried mother and usually contacts the mother before she leaves the hospital. Additionally, a worker attempts to meet with the putative father (P.F.) to obtain social history information to assist in placement of the child. At the same time that worker attempts to negotiate a voluntary financial arrangement for support and maintenance. Court action (a “filiation” order) is always an option where these voluntary arrangements fail. The Department also collects payments from P.F.s and disburses the money to U.M.s and their children. (The acronyms are common usage at the time.) The services regarding P.F.s continues into the late seventies when the prejudice against illegitimacy lessens and placement services to U.M.s dwindle as more mothers keep their babies. Counseling and support service to single parent mothers continues to be of central concern to the department to the present day as many children living in poverty and many others coming into care originate in single parent families. (2,4)

1948 — By this year the Child Welfare Branch is responsible for supervision of almost 3000 children, both temporary and permanent wards. The increased number of children in ward care can be attributed, in part, to the withdrawal of Children’s Aid Societies. Medical services to wards and children in care by non-ward agreements are covered by the Medical Services Division of the Department of Public Health. Older permanent wards are encouraged to get as much education as possible, including university, technical and apprenticeship trade training. At this time, many wards are still in institutional care (Kilburn Hall, Embury House, St. Patrick Orphanage) due to a shortage of foster homes. To encourage foster parenting the maintenance rates are brought more in line with the cost of living.

1947-1948 — The Child Welfare Branch sets up a subsidized foster home in Prince Albert as a temporary receiving home for children apprehended in that area. The Branch also begins to use small private boarding schools, sponsored by religious groups and service clubs as resources for its wards.

1945-1947 — The Child Welfare Branch opens and operates the Babies Nursery in a wing of the Boys' Industrial School in Regina pending the development of a permanent facility. By May 1946 there is accommodation for thirty babies.

As government services to children grow, the administration of these services becomes more complex and agencies and government departments find they are overlapping services. In 1948 an intergovernmental committee meets to address these issues. They recommend:

- 1. Establishment of health and welfare regions**
- 2. Establishing one region immediately as a demonstration project**
- 3. Decentralization of social services to bring administration closer to the public**
- 4. Establishing a research committee to promote continual study and evaluation of programs**

The implementation of these recommendations will to have a significant impact on the service structure.

1949 — Change of name for the department responsible for child welfare and other social services to The Department of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation — to reflect the work being done with returning veterans of WW II. (1)

1950 - 51 — The work of the Child Welfare Branch is decentralized and regional offices are created in Regina, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford and Yorkton.(1)

1953 — Standards are established for working with children in the areas of protection, children of unmarried parents and children in institutions, foster homes and adoption programs.

1959 — The Social Aid Act and regulations are enacted and administered by municipalities with the goal of ensuring local, timely response of financial assistance to children in families in need.(1)

1959 — The introduction of Aid to Dependent Families, a provincially administered program to address family poverty and as a longer term, more comprehensive, service to families on Social Aid .(1)

1959 — The last Children's Aid Society, in Saskatoon, ceases operation and the Department of Social Services becomes responsible for all child welfare in the province.

1959 — Juvenile Delinquents: Prior to 1947 care and treatment of juveniles found guilty of a criminal offence under the Criminal Code are dealt with by the Child Welfare Branch and its antecedent, the Bureau of Child Protection. Between 1947 and 1959 these youth fall under jurisdiction of Corrections Branch. In 1959 legislation is enacted to have all children, regardless of how they come to the attention of government authorities, handled under the authority of the Child Welfare Act.

1967 — Adopt Indian and Metis Program (A.I.M.) is established with Federal assistance, for the purpose of locating and preparing adoption homes for Indian and Metis children who are in permanent care of the Minister and in need of an adoption home. Recognizing the importance of cultural identity, the program makes special effort to recruit families of Aboriginal origin. In 71-72 the program is expanded to include any child who is a permanent ward and in need of an adoption home.

Contrary to public opinion of the time ( which continues into later years), this is not a child protection program and does not take children into care. It is dedicated to finding permanent adoption families for children who are already permanently in care of the Minister and are considered “unadoptable.”

1973-74 — The Family Services Act is passed and implemented.

The thrust of this legislation is primarily to enable the Department of Social Services to provide support and early intervention services to families and avoid children becoming in need of protection. The Family Services Act envisions a multi-pronged approach including community based services to establish a systematic network of supports for families — both primary services to prevent problems arising in the first place and secondary preventative services to address growing issues. In this service scheme child protection services are still essential, but are supported by an umbrella of programs in the community and throughout the Department of Social Services. Child Protection retains its essential mandate, with the hope that a larger array of community-based services will lessen the need to exercise this mandate.

The Family Services Act also updates the definitions of ‘child in need of protection,’ as well as establishing firmer legal guidelines for the child protection and adoption legal processes.

1977 — The Child Protection Registry is initiated. Provinces begin to share information on transient families with a record of abuse and neglect.

1984 — The Federal Government replaces the Juvenile Delinquents Act with the Young Offenders Act. The former JDA treated offenses by young persons (under 16 years) as family-based child welfare matters. There is a change of emphasis from a child welfare to a justice model. The age of a young offender is raised from 16 years to 18 years and the system now deals with an age span of 12-17 year olds. While the Federal Government is

responsible for the legislation it is the responsibility of the provinces to implement it. The Government of Saskatchewan assigns the Department of Social Services responsibility for services to youth found to be guilty of a criminal offence. The Department espouses a “youth model, “ of service delivery that recognizes youthful offenders require services that differ from adult offenders — their needs are nearer to those of youth in care, in fact too often they are the same youth — and should be housed apart from adult offenders. Additionally facilities should attempt to separate older and younger offenders within the Young Offender category.

A critical feature of the legislation is that the definition of “youth” includes seventeen and eighteen year olds. This creates problems for service delivery as the needs of a 12 or 13 year old differ substantially from that of a 17 or 18 year old.

1989 — The Child and Family Services Act is passed.

Highlights — spousal violence is added as a reason for considering child in need of protection, sharpened focus on “best interest of children” and timely resolution of care and custody issues, change in time lines on court action and length of time a child can remain in temporary care. Child protection is cast as a last resort service and more specific provisions are provided for development and availability of community-based ‘prevention” services. Removal of a child must be based upon an additional test of immediate jeopardy.

1989 — First tripartite agreements between Federal, Provincial and First Nations governments to delegate to First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies the delivery of child welfare services on reserves. Eventually 18 agencies will provide child welfare services to nearly all reserve communities.

1994 — Office of the Children’s Advocate is established — an office independent of any government ministry, reporting to the speaker of the legislature with a mandate to “promote the interests of, and act as a voice for children and youth who have concerns about provincial government services. The Children’s Advocate engages in public education, works to resolve disputes and conducts independent investigations. The Children’s Advocate also recommends improvement to programs for children to the government and/or the Legislative Assembly.”

2000 circa — First Nations governments renew efforts to create their own child welfare legislation and develop more child welfare services under the authority of First Nations government that will extend to First Nations regardless of place of residence. It is argued a First Nations Child and Family Service Act would be inspired by First Nations cultural traditions and values that emphasis the importance of children and families in First Nations culture.

2003 — The Youth Criminal Justice Act replaces the Young Offenders Act. The new legislation encourages more extensive use of measures alternative to incarceration.

Saskatchewan moves the administration of youth justice programs to the Department of Justice.

2008 —The newly titled Ministry of Social Services announces there will be a review of child welfare legislation. Opportunities will be created for general community and child welfare interest groups to have input into shaping new legislation, policies and procedures.

The review is prompted in part by a sharp escalation in the number of children coming into care in the past 5 years accompanied by a shortage of foster care resources — problems common, in varying degree, to most North American communities.

*The histories of the Adoption Program in Saskatchewan and Institutional Care For Special Groups of Children, are of course , inseparable from the history of Protection and Child Care and together they constitute the history of Child Welfare in Saskatchewan. We have reported significant events in each of these in the Annotated Time line but we believe there is some profit — increase in understanding , provision of more detail, clearer view of the path each has taken in its development — in viewing each separately.*

*In the following two sections we do a cursory tracing of their separate histories. Cursory, because it would take much more research and analyses to do them justice. There is some repetition of entries from the main Annotated Time Line, but also some new material. Again we have used the Annotated Time Line format.*

## **ADOPTION**

1912-1913 — The Superintendent's Bulletin for this fiscal year expresses concern about unrecorded adoptions. Children in foster care do not enjoy the right of inheritance and provision should be made for the children in the event of the death of the foster parents.

1922 — Adoption legislation is passed in Saskatchewan. The Commissioner of Child Protection is appointed Provincial Officer for all adoptions and his/her consent is required to each application before the Court order is granted. There is also a supervised probationary period of one year before final adoption. The process includes a home study, determination of the suitability of the child for each home, a guarantee that the child is legally free for adoption, and an assurance that the birth registration is appropriately changed by Vital Statistics Branch. Prior to this time there is no legal mechanism for transferring guardianship from birth parent to the child's caregiver. The child living in along term foster home has no legal rights with respect to inclusion in the family. i.e. use of surname, right to inherit, long term commitment from the family.

In 1930 there are 200 adoptions of which 71 are non-wards and 129 are agency wards. There are a total of 1104 legal adoptions in the eight years since the passage of the Act in 1922. (2)

1930's — It is understandable that the rate of adoption decreases during the depression given the financial pressures of the time. The ten dollar fee for an adoption is waived.

Given the situations out of which children are coming into care the courts are more concerned about the legal requirements around the transfer of guardianship. When natural parents refuse to consent, as is required by law, it is necessary to establish that the parents are unfit and improper persons and that it is in the best interests of the child to grant the adoption.

Every effort is made to establish paternity of illegitimate children placed for adoption. And despite some views to the contrary, adoptive parents are given background information on the child and all adoptions are subject to a period of supervision before the adoption is granted. Applicants are expected to select a child from the group of children available for placement.

1930's — In the annual reports of these years the Bureau expresses alarm at the perceived rise in the number of illegitimate births. Whether there is an actual increase remains an unanswered question. The apparent increase may be a result of how the births of the children are registered, among other factors. As well, parents in common-law unions are treated as equivalent to unmarried parents. However, the Bureau hesitates to remove children for no reason other than the moral factor in spite of pressure from the community to do so.

There is continued emphasis on obtaining support from the putative fathers through affiliation orders. Still, the amount of money collected is less than previous years even after threat of imprisonment. In 1930 legislation acknowledging the right to collect maintenance from the putative father is strengthened. It is felt that enforcing the financial responsibility of the putative father in many cases prevents the child from becoming a public liability. When the child is placed for adoption, established paternity aids in the selection of the child. It is felt that enforcing the putative father's responsibility will have a wholesome moral effect on the community. (2)

1934 — The Child Welfare Act is amended requiring that all maternity homes in the province be licensed. The Bureau looks to maternity homes to reform young mothers during the period of their confinement and do not consider these services the responsibility of a government agency. The philosophy regarding unmarried parents during the 1930's is righteous and moralistic and the approach to unmarried parents is often harsh and judgmental. (2)

1936-1937 — The Commissioner's report of this fiscal year measures the Bureau's practices against the standards proposed by the Child Welfare League of America. This review addresses safeguards in placement, the role of private child placing agencies, the functions of maternity homes, the functions of the state to safeguard adoptions, inter-provincial traffic in babies, and the three essential elements of adoption: placement should be done only by state and licensed private agencies; the state should be responsible for supervision of child placing and home finding and providing the court with reliable data on which to make a decision; and there should be a probationary period of at least one year

with at least four visits to the home during that period. As with all policies the practical realities of implementation are another matter.

In the 1940s the number of applicants to adopt children exceeds the number of children available. The result is a high degree of selectivity in choosing a home for a child. There is concern that staff, due to heavy caseloads, are not able to provide the kind of adoption placement supervision necessary to meet its obligations.

Subsequent years will introduce many positive innovations to the adoption program. Without going into the specific legislation and timing, here are the highlights:

- the service is altered to allow for more participation by all parties involved in the process
- birth parents have more rights under the law e.g. they can be involved in the selection process to determine the placement of the child and are provided with follow up information
- adopting parents are given full information
- the adoption process itself is simplified as far as possible without jeopardizing the rights of all parties
- subsidies are available for children with special needs who may not otherwise have a home available due to the high cost of medical or other kinds of care
- special emphasis on finding adoption resources for children with special needs
- the Adoption Reunion program is created, where an adult can request contact with a birth parent, or conversely, a birth parent can request contact with a birth child. Contact is initiated by mutual consent and with the assistance of an intermediary worker from the Post Adoption Program.

## INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR SPECIAL GROUPS OF CHILDREN.

1908 — The Juvenile Delinquents Act of Canada is passed ensuring youthful offenders are considered and treated as separate and apart from adult offenders.

Children ten years of age or older who run afoul of the law can be admitted to an Industrial School for an indefinite period. Good conduct, progress in school, and industry in farm or shop work during the period in the institution earns the parole of the child to a foster home. The Portage la Prairie Industrial School serves boys, while the girls are sent to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Winnipeg, or the Presbyterian Social Service House in Calgary.

Children with special needs, such as the deaf, dumb, blind and feebleminded are deemed best served in special institutions. Children from Saskatchewan, depending on the disability, are served by the Ontario Institute for the Blind in Brantford, Ontario or the Institute for the Deaf in Winnipeg. Feebleminded children comprise the largest number in this group of special needs children. While the lower intelligence group is accommodated in mental hospitals, there is no training facility in the west for those who can benefit from such a service. The Superintendent recommends that Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba develop a common facility for these children.(2)

1915 — The Portage Industrial School doubles its maintenance rate and precipitates the opening of an industrial school for boys in Saskatchewan. The former court house in Wolseley is converted for the purpose.

Deaf and blind children are not made wards of the Superintendent but the province assumes some of the financial burden. This makes them eligible for services that may be available outside the province. Parents retain guardianship. The role of the Superintendent is to seek out these parents and advise them of services available. The government agency also provides escort services for the children to and from these special schools. In 1914 the Superintendent of Child Welfare and the Superintendent of Education are authorized to open a school for the deaf which is housed in the former legislative buildings in Regina. It opens in 1915 with an enrollment of 35 students. This is short lived and next year 50 students are again enrolled in the Winnipeg school for the deaf. Blind children continue to be sent to Brantford and Montreal. (2)

1917 — The Juvenile Courts Act is passed . This is Federal legislation, but the Province is responsible for its administration. The staff are locally appointed volunteers and paid probation officers. A special Judge is appointed under the Juvenile Courts Act, and in practice, the staff of the Children Aid Societies and provincial government have this function added to their duties. The rationale of the legislation is summed up in the report of J.J. Kelso:

“For the proper working out of the juvenile court idea, two auxiliaries are indispensable, probation agents and a children’s temporary shelter or detention home. The Judge cannot personally investigate the cases brought before him nor can he follow up the case after it has been brought before him. This is the work of

probation agents, and their patience and friendly interest in the child and his home surroundings can usually save further court proceedings. Many of these probation agents will doubtless be ladies who have special qualifications for work of this kind.”

The establishment of a Juvenile Court sets up the legal machinery to separate cases where children are involved from the adult court system. This is a monumental step forward and is in line with what is happening in other jurisdictions.

Services to the feeble-minded continue to be a concern. The recommendations of a national conference studying the issue conclude the solution of the problem is isolation of all feeble-minded women of child-bearing age. Children labeled “idiot” are provided with custodial care in mental hospitals, but there is an absence of care for the training of children less handicapped. (2)

1919 — The facility for boys seventeen years old and under moves to a location on the outskirts of Regina previously occupied by the Indian School. (What will become The Paul Dojack Center for youthful offenders 70 years into the future). The boys attend school on the grounds and work in rotation at shoe repairing, baking, and laundry for the institution. Baseball, football and skating make up the recreation program. Detention homes in Alberta and Manitoba continue to be used for girls.

1930 — Parents of deaf children continued to object to sending their children far from home for services. As a result, the School for the Deaf is opened in Saskatoon. The education program at Saskatoon is administered by the Department of Education and eventually complete responsibility for the institution is transferred to that department. Meanwhile, because there are relatively few blind children they remain the responsibility of the Bureau.

The 1930 reports of the Commissioner continue to stress the need for a training school for mental defectives. The Commissioner also recommends the formation of a traveling mental health clinic for the province to be comprised of a physician, a psychiatrist, a nurse and a social worker. Their purpose will be to examine children for admission to a training school or custodial institution as well as give guidance to parents and teachers. In 1936 part four of the Child Welfare Act is deleted and transferred to the Department of Public Health for administration.

1940's — The Child Welfare Branch continues to use the Brantford school for the Blind. Transportation and maintenance are assumed by the province.

1946 — A Baby's Nursery is established in Regina, operated by Regina Children's Aid Society with accommodation for 30 babies. Later it becomes known as Dales House and is operated by the Department when Regina CAS withdraws from service. It is gradually converted into a receiving center for all ages of children.

1945 -1947 — Institutional care for children continues to play a critical role in the temporary care of children. The number of children requiring institutional care increases and more space is needed. The Province finds that many older children don't assimilate well into foster homes and begin to use private boarding schools and convents for older wards. The lack of a girl's correctional school creates problems and a solution is sought.

1947 — Delinquent girls continue to be accommodated in Alberta and Manitoba but a Hostel is opened in Regina for girls experiencing adjustment problems. A receiving home, with a capacity for twenty children is opened in North Battleford for the temporary care of apprehended children. (2)

1947 — The Green Lake shelter is opened to accommodate Metis children in northern Saskatchewan. This is intended to circumvent the problem of moving northern children to white foster homes and communities in southern Saskatchewan where they experience isolation from their community and often the prejudice of the receiving community.

In 1946 - 1947 — The Regina Children's Aid Society withdraws from the child protection field. Embury house is transferred to the provincial agency and continues to operate as a receiving home. It is eventually converted into a residential treatment center for children with severe emotional problems. This is a significant development in that it signals the withdrawal of the non-governmental sector from mandated child protection services and full assumption of this responsibility by the Province.(2)

The commissioner receives many requests to commit feebleminded children into ward care. There are no appropriate services available to meet the special needs of these children. They end up in institutional care with normal children because they are not deemed suitable for foster care. The more severely defective children are admitted to the children's ward of the Weyburn Mental Hospital. Parental involvement in the lives of these children is minimal, either because they are financially unable or unwilling to bear the costs of visits to their children or to have difficulty dealing with the stigma attached to mental illness or mental deficiency. (2)

1957-58 —An industrial school for boys opens in Regina to replace the one burned in 1948. The school is located on the site that will eventually accommodate the Wascana Rehabilitation Center. As the city expands it is forced to move out of the city and will eventually become known as the Paul Dojack Youth Center.

1958. The department secures Kilburn Hall in Saskatoon and runs it as a receiving center and treatment center for male and female children in care. Dales House is used in the same capacity in Regina.

1966 — Ranch Ehrlo, a private treatment institution, is established — initially as a facility for emotionally disturbed boys, 6-12 yrs. A branch facility is opened in Prince Albert later in the decade.

In the same year, Brown Camps, another facility for emotionally disturbed children opens in Moose Jaw. Brown Camps closes after a few years of operation, though the organization continues to operate a Northern Wilderness camp for teen boys for several years.

1968-69 — Roy Wilson Center in Sedley, SK opens for the treatment of emotionally disturbed girls ages 12-16. The center operates into the mid 80's before closing.

1984 — Following the passing of the Young Offenders Act, secure custody facilities for male and female youth are created in Regina – Paul Dojack Center (conversion of Boys School, child welfare facility and former Industrial School) and in North Battleford (conversion of a wing of the old Mental Hospital, both for male youth. Kilburn Hall in Saskatoon is converted from a child welfare facility to a secure custody center for male and female youth. Open custody facilities for boys are established in Regina (conversion of Dales House a child welfare facility) in Saskatoon (Yarrow Youth Farm) near Yorkton (White Spruce) and Creighton ( conversion of an Adult Corrections Facility). Camp locations are established at Kenosee and Prince Albert. Smaller centers along with open custody placements in private homes will be developed later.

2000 — Red Willow Children's Center is constructed in Saskatoon to provide assessment and stabilization of youth male and female.

2006 — Shortly after opening a new co-ed facility in the Buckland area, in rural Prince Albert, Ranch Ehrlo celebrates 50 years of service.

2007 — Ranch Ehrlo opens another new co-ed facility near Saskatoon in the Warman area.

## **PIONEERS**

The initiation and development of child protection legislation, policy and procedures, are only part of the story and in many respects, a small part. It takes competent and dedicated people to bring the legislation to fruition. The citizens of Saskatchewan owe a debt of gratitude to the people who made it happen — legislators, program staff, administrative staff and field workers — who had the foresight and courage to commit to the process.

The pioneers were people like the first Superintendent of Child Protection services, S. Spencer Page, who was succeeded by Ms Ethel J. Maclachlan and F. J. Reynolds. They served not only as administrators but also worked as field staff, especially in the early days. They had no blueprint to follow, no local precedent on which to rely. They took chances on behalf of children at serious risk.

Perhaps the one who had the most significant influence on the development of child protection and child care services was Mildred E. Battel. She led the Child Welfare Branch for 25 years (1939 - 1964) striving to make it a professional service. She was assisted by persons such as Alice Dales after whom the present day Dales House is named and Roy Wilson, after whom the former Wilson Centre in Sedley was named.

Alice Dales told of her life as a young social worker where she periodically boarded a train with a bundle of babies to be delivered to waiting approved adoptive parents. She dropped them off as the train proceeded down the line. All of Saskatchewan was her territory and train transportation was the only secure method of travel available to her.

Many people contributed to the development of child protection and its allied services in those early days. They had daunting obstacles to overcome in their day to day work but they were not deterred and for the most part they succeeded. We trust readers of this piece will recall and suggest other names worthy of being added to this short list. We named a few so we do not forget the contributions of the many.

## REFLECTIONS

We introduced our subject by saying — The history of child welfare in Saskatchewan is marked by periodic swings in increasing demand for services and growing numbers of children entering care followed by slow growth, even decline in numbers of children in-care, accompanied by public and political apathy. Additionally, we observed that currently there are growing pressures from within and without the field of child welfare to find new ways to understand and address the pendulum swings that occur in many jurisdictions throughout the western world.

Poverty is proven to be a major factor in drawing children into the child welfare system. The failure of all governments to act effectively in lowering the number of families living in poverty underscores the need for new directions and innovative solutions to this long standing problem.

There are two sides to this failure and they are equally tragic. First, there is the damage done to children and families by hunger, poor living conditions, lack of opportunity and low self-esteem. And by neglect and abuse from parents who themselves have been damaged — initially as children in the same situation, but now as disadvantaged adults. Second, a more hidden, less recognized and little discussed tragedy, is the impact on a society where compassion, generosity and communal good will is diminished and growth stunted. As one observer once put it:

*‘The best test of a civilized society is the way in which it treats its most vulnerable and weakest members.’ — Mahatma Gandhi*

In view of this failure, it is important to find ways to minimize the effects of poverty on children and develop innovative strategies to manage the growing numbers of children in care who are there, in a large part because of the effect of poverty in their lives. But both must be viewed as only stop-gap measures and must not distract from the main goal of eliminating poverty.

We must keep in mind that poverty is more than lack of money. Among the resource-poor there is often a poverty of spirit, a sense of entrapment and hopelessness, a feeling of not belonging and worthlessness. Adequate income is fundamental to the good health of a family. Additionally, a strong society must provide an array of individual, family and child support services e.g. services to victims

of abuse, psychiatric services, easily accessible counseling to address a variety of problems (addictions, delinquency, family violence) child day care, parenting education to name a few.

Some of these might be categorized as “preventive measures” an idea that continues to receive lip service in all jurisdictions but without full commitment from any of them, even though there appears to be growing pressure to move from rhetoric to actualization. Bureaucratically organized child rescue services can never be plentiful enough to address the demand for them where a society has neglected its role in ensuring that families then neighbors and community members, who are first second and third in line to care for children, have the incentive and the resources to do that job. (Another dimension of this failure occurs when professionals advocate and lobby to replace these first three lines of caring response with their own brand of service). Perhaps a new vision for child welfare begins with acting on these understandings.

Clearly, these are the central and most critical challenge to child welfare services today. Perhaps we can learn to look at the past in a way that recognizes the seeds of new solutions already sown there. Though careful examination will also show the failures of past and not so distant actions can provide warnings about false paths in the present and into the future. To paraphrase the proverb that begins this survey — we must learn to survey the record of the past with two eyes. Perhaps the two eyes the proverb refers to are the inner eye of insight and compassion and the outer eye of fact finding and ordering of resources. Or perhaps it refers to the forward looking eye and the backward looking eye. There are many forms and degrees of both literal and metaphorical blindness and vision. A good proverb has many interpretations. But certainly to either forget the past, or alternatively, to obsess about it, is to court a measure of ignorance and to limit the vision of possibility in the present and future.

A final thought. Over the past few months of studying parts of the historical record we often asked ourselves the questions — was this a successful development and does it have some relevance in today’s world? This led us to examine the concept of “success” itself, its prominence in our planning and thinking, its slippery and varied definitions and at the same time its importance and apparent necessity in the field of child welfare.

What constitutes success in a child welfare program? Were the earlier programs successful? Are the current programs more or less successful than the earlier ones? Can we attribute any success we have achieved to the foundations laid down for us and from what we have learned from earlier mistakes and accomplishments? What factors do we build into a program to make success more likely?

These are difficult, if not impossible, questions to answer but they weigh heavily on the consciousness of all the key actors. And they must be answered in some form for the governments and others who fund these services

Who measures success and by what standards? The definition of program success seems to vary from individual to individual, group to group, culture to culture, era to era. The criteria of measurement too, seem to vary quite widely — cost/ benefit analysis, public approval, adherence to a political philosophy, to a moral, ethical or religious criteria, to professional standards or by a survey of client satisfaction.

The current trend is to attempt to measure successful out-come. It is proving difficult and perhaps impossible to measure the transformation of subjective feelings objectively — e.g. grief counseling, parenting education, mediation, family support, etc. On the other hand, we seem to be satisfied with the supposedly hard data when it shows fewer families living below the poverty line, fewer youth incarcerated, fewer children in care — while remaining suspicious that this may not be the whole story.

It can be argued that the results of services rendered by physicians, taken collectively, are abysmal since all their patients eventually die. Child welfare workers are often subjected to similar criticism — child neglect and abuse escalates — why can't professionals do more about it? "Doing nothing sometimes appears just as effective!" Can maintaining the *status quo* be considered success? What about slowing the rate of deterioration?

These are salient questions in the field of child welfare. None of them can be clearly answered from a perusal of the record.

The Hippocratic Oath applied to the medical profession states: "*primum nil nocere* — First do no harm" Perhaps in the end child welfare professionals and others concerned can only say – "We cannot stand by and do nothing, but when we choose to act, we must make our best effort and not leave those we try to help worse off than before." Measured by two key attributes of the human species — called to compassion and to never be totally certain — this must be enough.

## SUMMARY

Every reader views the record of child welfare in Saskatchewan through subjective lens and sees different things in it. To the authors the record seems to suggest ways a society might respond in navigating a path toward a better child welfare. In the following we present our understanding — with a few examples without attempting to be exhaustive or to cite hard evidence — of some lessons from the record of the past.

## LESSONS FROM THE PAST

### 1. No Easy Fix For Breakdowns In Child Welfare

No single approach can address all problems — there is no magic bullet. A multi-faceted, broad-based strategy is called for — integrative, comprehensive, inclusive, open minded — are other words to describe it.

*The record reveals experiment with various approaches to child welfare e.g.: Children's Aid Societies coupled with a government (Bureau) services, church, and neighborhood rescue. Unpaid foster care, institutional care, group homes, paid foster homes, kinship care are the tried solutions to alternate care. Courting community involvement on the one hand, while developing government programs on the other seem to be always present to some degree.*

*In the current crises of rising numbers of children in care and lack of alternate care resources there seems to be a willingness to accept more community involvement and entertain a greater variety of possible solutions. Innovation often arises out of accepting a wide range participants and possibilities.*

## 2. **Seize the Day**

Chance and luck (good and bad) are always factors. We must be ready to seize the opportunity they offer and be prepared to risk and accept (or reap the benefits of ) the consequences. Political and bureaucratic expediency often leans toward the safe, popular move, or the *status quo*.

*Two world wars, a severe economic depression and an extended period of drought, are key events from Saskatchewan's past where "bad luck" was followed by a period of creativity in child welfare. Movement from the status of a "have-not" to a "have" province due mainly to unexpected oil and potash revenues are examples of "good luck" which has given the province the opportunity to create new resources to address social concerns.*

## 3. **Unsolvble Problems Can Still Be Well Managed**

There are convergent human problems (solvable) and divergent human problems (not solvable, but manageable).

*Convergent human problems may include — mobilization of public will, application of best practices and provision of sufficient resources to meet a need. Examples of divergent human problems may include: human perfectibility, sufficient knowledge, predictability, guaranteed prevention and equal distribution of a society's resources among all its citizens. An example of the last may be the perennial problem of providing access to resources in the rural and northern parts of Saskatchewan.*

## 4. **Aim to Gain the Trust of All Citizens**

Generosity, good will and ethical behavior are imperative. We must become the kind of society that can be relied on by its citizens — especially the most vulnerable — to do the right thing.

*The record shows a struggle in each of these areas in the past. Progress is slow in dealing with the big issues: poverty, youth criminal justice, numbers of children in care, provision of alternative care resources. But we also see hopeful signs — with occasional lapses — in all areas, e.g. the emergence of First Nations child welfare, attention to social justice and structural changes to protect children's rights.*

*The reluctance of professional social workers to enter or remain in the field of child protection, stress, low morale and burnout among those who do, and failure of society to*

*provide the supports for them to do their job may be further examples of a weakening of these qualities in our society.*

**5. Poverty Creates Business for Child Welfare**

Adequate financial assistance is necessary for families to stave off poverty and negate the erosion of parenting ability — adequate housing, employment, supportive child care, and need specific assistance are all part of this.

*The earliest attempts to enhance income — Mothers Allowance, Social Aid and Family Allowance came with an understanding of the effect poverty can have on parenting. Subsequent income security changes have helped incrementally, with large gaps remaining to be addressed. There seems to be a growing understanding throughout society of the connection between poverty, child neglect and abuse, crime and the mounting number of children living apart from their families.*

**6. Act With All Due Respect**

Our actions must be marked by respectful language. We must examine our terminology and labeling for underlying negative values that are hurtful and disabling to individuals and families, while impeding our collective ability to address the issues.

*There are many examples of moralistic and degrading language in the history of child welfare. — unmarried parents, First Nations , the poor, the disabled and the unemployed have often been the target. It seems easy to see this from the perspective of the present. What examples might some future observer see clearly when looking back on the early 21st century?*

**7. Child Welfare Cannot Function in Isolation**

Programs and services must be child-centered, family-focused, community-based, culturally-respectful, relationship based and open to public examination and shaping.

*The developing partnership in child welfare with First Nations communities and the continual development in the social work profession of a child-entered, family focused and relationship based practice are demonstrated by the past record. Early involvement of municipalities in child welfare, along with attempts to make Children's Aid Societies community based have established a trend of community involvement — not always evident — that has ebbed and flowed in strength over the years.*

**8. Sound Information, Experienced Informants, Consensus and Imagination are the Key Ingredients to Successful Change**

Policy and program planning must be powered by accurate and comprehensive information, informed by experiential knowledge and wide consensus, and offered space for the exercise of imagination and creativity.

*Various authors are attributed with the observation that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again unsuccessfully and expecting different results. The past record of child welfare in Saskatchewan offers numerous examples of this. Also, it is said that “Those who ignore the past are condemned to repeat it.” Examples may include managing child protection by improving the capacity to apprehend children, and attempting to develop more of the same resources to deal with the problem this creates.*

*Dedication to the rhetoric of prevention **while not committing the required resources may be another.** Recent developments in the approach to foster care resources are encouraging though there have been few imaginative alternatives developed to stem the flow of children into care.*

#### 9. **A Review of the Legislation is Always Timely**

Legislation change is sometimes necessary to suggest and consolidate a new direction.

*It could be demonstrated that each of the four pieces of child welfare legislation addressed growing concerns and forged a new direction which was an improvement over the last legislation. The Ministry’s plan to revise legislation once again is driven by both a clear need for change and consolidation of emerging practice.*

#### 10. **The Tail Sometimes Wags the Dog**

The administrative structure must adapt to support the program in delivering an effective service — not the other way around. The best designed services and most abundant resources are of no consequence if they are not delivered in an effective and timely fashion. Too often the needs of the administration and bureaucracy (for efficiency, regulation and serving political interests) trump program needs a take precedence over effective program delivery.

*Structural changes are often undertaken to deal with program deficiencies. The history of government social service delivery is marked by movements from centralization, to decentralization and back again, department name changes and up-sizing, down-sizing and redeploying middle management. These kinds of changes absorb a lot of personnel energy and financial resources and often confuse and ill-serve the citizens it purports to help.*

*Other examples from the record include: overwhelming paper-work that diverts professional time away from client service, and appointing managers who are skilled in general management theory and technique but are ignorant of program objectives and nuance.*

## 11. Complex Problems Require Comprehensive Solutions

Though at any given time, focus on any one of these areas may advance child welfare, attention to all areas has, in the long run, the best chance of furthering the welfare of children.

*Multifaceted, integrative, comprehensive, broad-based and inclusive.*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The footnoted numbers in the text refer to material from these sources:

1. Department of Social Services Staff Training manuals circa 1960's

Note: The various versions of Training Manuals from the 1960's rely heavily on the text of Helen Smith's thesis. We have borrowed liberally from both sources but have chosen to credit the original author in most cases.

2. Helen Louise Johnson (Smith) Thesis "THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM IN SASKATCHEWAN, 1952", The University of British Columbia: Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work in the School of Social Work.

Helen Johnson/Smith has done a most valuable service to students of Child Welfare history in Saskatchewan by retrieving this record in such a logical and comprehensive manner. Interested readers are encouraged to go directly to the thesis for a more complete treatment of the subject.

3. Gray Books. The authors thank the Ministry of Social Services and especially Marilyn Schultz of the Post Adoption Program for arranging access to the Gray Books and other archival materials as well as assisting in the interpretation of these documents.

4. Mildred E. Battel, "Children Shall Be First; Child Welfare Saskatchewan 1944-64, Assisted by The Local History Program, Saskatchewan Department of Culture and Youth."

5. Legislation quoted;

The Child Protection Act 1908  
The Child Welfare Act 1945  
The Family Services Act 1973  
The Child and Family Services Act 1989

## Pictures

1. Early Gray Book Records  
- Children in care of Children's Aid Societies & Bureau of Child Protection, Gov't of Saskatchewan
2. Gray Books Example
3. Sample of Early Gray Book Record
4. Child Protection Staff & Old Age Pension Branch - 1929

5. Child Protection Staff & Old Age Pension - 1929
6. Alice Dales
  - Child care/adoption worker 1929, after whom "Dale's House", Regina is named
7. St. Patrick's Orphanage - Prince Albert
  - courtesy of Saskatchewan Archives Board
8. Moose Jaw Children's Shelter
  - courtesy of Saskatchewan Archives Board
9. Embury House
  - orphanage & receiving home, Regina
  - courtesy of Saskatchewan Archives Board
10. Orange Home - Indian Head
11. Kilburn Hall
  - courtesy of Saskatoon Public Library
12. Mercy Hospital - Regina
  - home for unmarried mothers
13. Northwest Territorial Government Buildings
  - leased from 1922 - 1977 by the Salvation Army as Grace Haven - a home for unmarried mothers.
  - illustrator: William Argan
  - Saskatchewan Archives Board