



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

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April 2, 2019

Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington St.
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

RE: BILL C-92 AND MANITOBA FIRST NATIONS-SPECIFIC LEGISLATION *BRINGING OUR CHILDREN HOME ACT*

Further to the February 7, 2019 letter, we write you today in order to voice our concerns with Bill C-92 *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth and families*, and ask that you support Manitoba First Nations-specific legislation *Bringing Our Children Home Act*.

What we find very problematic about Bill C-92 is that by proposing this bill, you and Minister Seamus O'Regan made the decision to impose a Western value system and an arrangement to negotiate our rights as First Nations. This is reflective in this Liberal government (along with previous Conservative and Liberal governments) proposing and enacting numerous legislation that has been consistently passed without our consent.

We as First Nations have suffered through systemic racist policies like the Indian Residential School system, the Sixties Scoop, and various other policies. We understand that the government have attempted to rectify this through their numerous apologies. But Bill C-92 is still a reflection of dangerous paternalistic policies of the past. Government policies have created core trauma that we as First Nations continue to live with today.

Bill C-92 is another policy of assimilation. By proposing a Pan-Indigenous approach to fix First Nation child welfare, it ignores the rich and varied history of the role of First Nations in the creation of Canada, and ignores that First Nation children are the primary victims of child welfare. It is eerily reminiscent of when Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien attempted to remove Canada's obligation to our First Nations through then Liberal government's White Paper. It still refuses to allow us to practice our self-determination by refusing to allow the women of our nations to have a role in our families; it shows that your commitment to gender equality is hollow.

Prime Minister Trudeau, as the voices of the children, we ask you to move away from Bill C-92 and a one size fits all approach, to one that respect our distinct relationship between First Nations and the Crown. You can do that with an excellent opportunity to champion and support the Manitoba First Nations work in creating the *Bringing Our Children Home Act*, Manitoba First Nations-specific legislation for children and families.

As relayed to you in the February 7, 2019 letter from myself and Chief Francine Meeches, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) Chiefs-in-Assembly mandated the AMC Secretariat to create a Manitoba specific federal legislation that focuses on reasserting First Nations jurisdiction, entitled the *Bringing Our Children Home Act* (BOCHA). This approach and work was publicly supported by your Minister of Indigenous Services Canada in March 2018, and again in November, 2018.

The BOCHA is informed by Manitoba First Nations that is a mechanism by which our First Nations can exercise their full jurisdiction of their children and families through the development of First Nations laws. As Manitoba has had a unique experience in their relationship to Child and Family Services, the BOCHA is a Manitoba specific legislation that has First Nation families return to the traditional ways of raising children. The BOCHA represents an alternative to destructive policies committed by the government.

We call on you to not support Bill C-92, and again ask for you to direct your Ministers of Indigenous Services Canada and Justice Canada to work with Manitoba leadership to jointly draft a Member's Bill that will give effect to the Manitoba First Nations BOCHA. Enclosed is a comparative analysis of the Bill C-92 and the BOCHA.

Sincerely,

ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS



Grand Chief Arlen Dumas

Enclosed.