



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS



ABINOWIYAG BIGHIWEWAG
First Nations
Family Advocate Office
"Bringing Our Children Home"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 20, 2019

"Five years since Tina Fontaine's passing and little has changed in Manitoba"

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – This week marks the fifth anniversary of the tragic death of Tina Fontaine and little has changed to address root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Manitoba. Our hearts go out to Tina's family, friends and community for their loss.

Tina Fontaine's body was found on August 17th 2014, in the Red River after being abducted and killed near Downtown Winnipeg. Her death sparked outrage in First Nations regarding the many service agencies that failed Tina and her family. It also shone a light on the direct link between the gross over-representation of First Nations children in foster care and the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Manitoba.

"The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls found Canada guilty of ongoing genocide, which specifically includes the over-representation of our children in the foster care system. The foster care system not only caused children to fare far worse, it also caused physical and mental suffering on the families, most of whom are single Indigenous mothers," explained First Nation Child Advocate, Cora Morgan.

Five years have passed since Tina's preventable death, yet Manitoba remains at ground zero for some of the country's highest rates of First Nations children in foster care and some of the highest occurrences of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. More than 90% of all children in care in Manitoba are First Nations and nearly half of those missing and murdered are First Nations women and girls.

"The federal and provincial governments have replicated the residential school system all over again. These governments continue to control and oppress our people and the many deaths of our children in foster care are the result. The life chances of our children are greatly reduced when they enter Manitoba's child welfare system. They are more likely to be abused, trafficked, imprisoned, abducted or murdered, than live a happy, healthy and safe life as First Nations peoples. The federal and provincial government have a legal obligation to stop this genocide against our people," said Chief Francine Meeches.

"The federal government and the province of Manitoba had five years to work with First Nations and bring about substantive changes to end the theft of our children," said Grand Chief Arlen Dumas. "Yet, First Nations children are still being placed in non-Indigenous homes where they suffer from a lack of adequate supports and services, loss of connection with their culture and community, and are exposed to increased risk of abuse and even death. We have tried to work with governments in good faith to end this crisis, but little has changed. The genocide and the gross human rights violations against our people must end. It is long past time for governments to get out of the way, and let us lead the way to bring our children home," urged Grand Chief Dumas.



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ANISHINAWAG BIGHIWEWAG
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The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs acknowledges Tina Fontaine's family and community for their staunch advocacy to make sure her tragedy does not happen to any more First Nation children. The AMC would also like to acknowledge the tireless advocacy of First Nations leaders, citizens and activists – especially the women who have organized rallies and pushed so hard to keep this issue a priority in Manitoba. AMC will continue to push for First Nation jurisdiction in this area and bring First Nations children home.

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About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) represents 62 First Nations in Manitoba including the Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene and Dakota people.

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