



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

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Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Arlen Dumas welcomes delegates and offers opening remarks at the Bringing our Children Home National Conference

Treaty 1 Territory, Manitoba - Today, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, along with the AMC Women's Council, Elders, Chiefs, and advocates, welcomed over 400 delegates from across the country to the First Nations Family Advocates Office (FNFAO) hosted *Bringing our Children Home National Conference*. The national conference is the first of its kind in Canada. It is an important opportunity for delegates to learn from one another and discuss approaches that ensure the rights of First Nations children and families are upheld and protected in the face of provincial and federal government policy and pan-Indigenous legislation designed to encroach on and undermine First Nations jurisdiction over child and family services (CFS).

"On behalf of the AMC, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all delegates representing all our Nations from across all our territories, to this very important national gathering for discussions on the preservation of our families and protection of our children. I acknowledge the Treaty One First Nations as our hosts on their traditional lands," said Grand Chief Dumas.

"For many years, our First Nations leadership in Manitoba have been taking an active role in providing a path, and identifying the means to keep and bring our children home. Through the development of the *Bringing Our Children Home* Report, with the recommendation to develop the First Nations Family Advocate Office, it is our mandate at the AMC to support and advocate for First Nations families that are involved in the child and family services system."

In his opening remarks, Grand Chief Dumas stated, "We challenge the current CFS systems using our own knowledge, laws, traditions and belief system to create positive change for our children and families and bring more children back to their families, lands, and Nations. Since the establishment of the FNFAO, we have observed two consistent themes: firstly, that governments fail to truly recognize the legitimacy of First Nations laws and traditions. This is made clear by the implementation of Bill C-92 – a pan-Indigenous law that perpetuates the authoritarian role of the Provincial government. Bill C-92 does not adequately restore full jurisdiction to First Nations, but rather domesticates First Nations

jurisdiction and laws. The second theme of our work is that most of the considerable improvements to the current child welfare system have been accomplished by First Nations people.”

“Through the First Nations Family Advocate office, we are restoring our original systems of child rearing, education, and nurturance of individual spirit. We are finding appropriate ways to break the existing cycle to restore spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being, based on the First Nations’ principles of love, compassion, respect, and dignity,” concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

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About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 per cent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Inineew (Cree), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.