



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

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Paul Samyn, Editor
Winnipeg Free Press
1355 Mountain Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2X 3B6

Dear Mr. Samyn,

As the Winnipeg Free Press usually does a very good job of accurately writing about First Nations issues, it is unfortunate that I am compelled to write you regarding Ms. Paul's December 8, 2017, article *First Nations want equal voice in child welfare Ottawa pledges more than \$500,000 to facilitate talks with province*, and her December 12, 2017 article *Chiefs plan summit on child welfare reforms Indigenous communities will have final say on foster care changes, minister says*.

Ms. Paul inaccurately reported on the funding that was provided to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs by Canada and also made erroneous statements not based in fact.

First, the funding received was never meant to "facilitate talks with province" or "essentially buying them a seat at the table with the province to help design reforms." In fact, the funding provided was for the Keewaywin Engagement, an eight-month project that ran from November 2016 to June 30, 2017 – information Ms. Paul had directly from INAC. Though the Keewayin Engagement, the AMC engaged with First Nations grassroots citizens on their dreams for reform of the federal First Nations Child and Family Services Program. Among other things, the engagement identified the longstanding position of the AMC that First Nations must exert their jurisdiction over our families and children.

Second, Ms. Paul wrote "Ottawa announced word of the two-year agreement this week, saying it had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to drive change in child and family services in this province." She appears to insinuate that the December 7, 2017, signing of the MOU on child welfare between the AMC and Government of Canada resulted in a two-year agreement. This is not the case, as the AMC did not receive any funding for the signing of the MOU, and the funding received for the Keewayin Engagement was not contingent on the signing of the MOU.

Third, the statement "Manitoba would essentially have to agree to share jurisdiction with First Nations, something Dumas expects the province to recognize as First Nations work with the province on reforms" is inaccurate. It is not the province's jurisdiction to share. First Nations have the inherent jurisdiction to look after our children and families. That was the understanding when First Nations and the Province of Manitoba through the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative created the current system that temporarily "borrowed" provincial legislation.

Finally, Ms. Paul wrote "last week Ottawa committed funds to enable First Nations chiefs to be equal partners in the process." This is incorrect.

I look forward to you correcting Ms. Paul's articles.

Sincerely,
ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS

Arlen Dumas, Grand Chief