

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Manitoba First Nation Chiefs resolve to work together to prevent provincial unilateral approach to child welfare reform

TREATY ONE TERRITORY, MB _ The **Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs** (AMC) **Executive Council of Chiefs** (ECC) approved a resolution today, that in part, requires the Province of Manitoba to cease further unilateral policy and legislative developments regarding First Nations children and families.

"Any reform to the child welfare program must be informed and led by Manitoba First Nations. Governments have had the chance to impose their ideals and standards of child welfare, and they have failed Indigenous children with residential schools, the 60s Scoop and today with apprehension under the current child welfare system," said **Grand Chief Arlen Dumas**.

As part of Resolution ECC-17.05, *Notice to the Province of Manitoba of First Nations' Inherent Jurisdiction on Children and Families*, Manitoba First Nations will assert inherent jurisdiction over child and family services. This was supported by the signed Memorandum of Understanding between the **AMC** and Government of Canada on Dec. 7, 2017 in Ottawa.

Provincial and federal governments have always unilaterally imposed child welfare policies, with Indigenous people having to live out the realities of these destructive and adversarial policies in the form of broken spirits, families and communities.

"We never gave up the rights to our children and families, it was taken. We are now taking our inherent right to jurisdiction of our children and families back; this is what First Nations grassroots citizens and our leaders want," said Dumas.

In October, without careful consideration of and discussion with all Manitoba First Nations, the Province of Manitoba announced its plans for child welfare system reform that include removing barriers to permanent guardianship and the introduction of social impact bonds. The **Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs** strongly denounced this proposed plan by the Pallister government when it was announced during the Throne Speech.

When considered in the context of historical and current Indigenous child welfare realities — over 10,000 Indigenous children in CFS care and almost 6,000 of those being permanent wards living in non-Indigenous homes and the 60s Scoop's mass apprehension of Indigenous children for economic incentive rather than abuse or neglect — the province's reforms simply reconfigure past failed child welfare policies.

The **AMC First Nations Women's Council** supports the resolution signed today.

"The province cannot continue to make arbitrary decisions on behalf of our families. As it stands now, foster families have more rights than our children and families," said **Chief Betsy Kennedy** of War Lake First Nation, in reference to the province's plan to remove barriers to permanent guardianship.

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 Manitoba accounting for approximately 12 per cent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene and Dakota people and traditions.

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