



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2022

THE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS CELEBRATES 7-YEARS OF THE FIRST NATIONS FAMILY ADVOCATE OFFICE

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) is celebrating and acknowledging the First Nations Family Advocate Office (FNFAO) 7th year of Bringing Our Children Home.

“The FNFAO is a First Nations-led solution to the Child and Family Services (CFS) crisis that sought the apprehension and removal of thousands of First Nations children from their families, and Nations. The FNFAO is unique as it represents First Nations’ self-determination and the autonomy of our Nations. Meaning it is not under the constraints of provincial and federal legislation, instead, the FNFAO receives its mandate from the AMC Chiefs-in-Assembly, knowing that the office is to empower families and children based on our values, cultural practices, and traditions,” stated AMC Acting Grand Chief Cornell McLean.

In January 2014, the Manitoba government released the *Ted Hughes Report* which identified 62 recommendations related to the circumstances surrounding the death of Phoenix Sinclair. Unfortunately, First Nations in Manitoba did not have any input into the recommendations. Instead, the AMC Chiefs-in-Assembly took the lead in doing their own engagement with First Nations citizens, parents, grandparents, and youth to hear the voices of those who had firsthand experiences in the system, and to create a First Nations vision for change. This led to the development of the *Bringing Our Children Home Report* which identified 10 recommendations that sought an overall transition to a First Nations System that is based on the original ways of caring for our children and families.

“After almost 10 years of the release of the Hughes Report, not much has changed to reduce the number of First Nations children in the CFS system. Instead, we have a provincial government who are making minor reform decisions that do not substantiate any real or positive outcomes for our families. If the province continues to work in silos, instead of addressing the whole system’s spectrum, then, they will continue to be running in circles trying to address this crisis,” stated Acting Grand Chief Cornell McLean.

On June 1, 2015, the AMC opened the FNFAO in the ceremony, gifting the name *Abinoojiyag Bigiiwewag* which means “our children are coming home”. The FNFAO works with youth, parents, grandparents, and/or care providers to challenge the systematic racism in the CFS system by addressing unethical practices and/or human rights concerns that result from the decisions forced upon families and children.

“Our office has grown tremendously, since 2015. We have been working hard to repair the harm inflicted on our families through 150 years of government policy and to restore our sacred responsibility to children by working with families. We have over 30 staff that are dedicated to our families; to support them on their journey, and to give them the strength to walk a healthy path with their children. Every year, we have a celebration to honour our families, and this year it will be on June 7, 2022. It is important

to acknowledge the work of our families, and to celebrate their successes,” stated Cora Morgan, First Nations Family Advocate Office.

“The top priority for AMC and the FNFAO remains; to strengthen our families, children, and Nations by utilizing fundamental resources, enhancing capacity, and drawing from our natural laws to protect our children,” concluded Acting Grand Chief Cornell McLean.

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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 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Inineew (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.