



MEDIA RELEASE

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Indigenous Leadership Council to Meet with Province to Defend Children

WINNIPEG, MB - Today, the Indigenous Leadership Council met to respond to the provincial government's recent decision to move to block funding for Indigenous Children and Family Services in Manitoba. The Pallister government made the decision without properly consulting the Leadership Council. Minister of Families, Heather Stefanson, announced \$435 million in funding for the Child Welfare Authorities. The Leadership Council will meet with Minister Stefanson tomorrow, February 21, 2019, at 2:00 pm.

The Leadership Council includes President David Chartrand of the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), Grand Chief of the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Garrison Settee, and Grand Chief Jerry Daniels of the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO). Under Section 29 of *The Child and Family Services Act*, the province is to work with the Leadership Council to effect change for Indigenous children and families in Manitoba.

"The Pallister government has failed their legislated commitment to the Leadership Council to work with us on decisions that affect our children and families. We were supposed to have eight meetings over the last two years. We have never had one meeting," said President Chartrand. "In the name of cutting costs, they are playing politics with our children and our future. They have tried to side-step our Indigenous governments and determine what is best for us, for our People. But this approach has failed. It has seen our children stolen from our families, communities, and our Nation. It has resulted in generations of children in care. Pallister's government once again demonstrates that they have an anti-reconciliation agenda."

But as Grand Chief of the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. Garrison Settee stated, "The decision has already been made. The announcement leaves many unanswered questions. When are the governments going to learn the lesson? They are not sharing the numbers. They are not sharing how they came up with the number. Once again, the government has decided how they are going to make this decision without us. We have seen what happens when the decisions regarding the well-being of our People are made without us. This takes us back in the same direction of the Sixties Scoop and residential schools."

"There is a significant gap between the decision, legislation, and the policies for this block funding," stated Grand Chief Jerry Daniels of the Southern Chiefs' Organization. "Block funding hasn't worked in the past. Pallister's government hasn't shown anyone the block funding formula. What happens when, for example, a child is transferred from one agency to another? Who is going to pay for that cost? I am concerned that this will result in the agencies being forced to take on more debt to ensure that our children are safe and our families supported."

Ninety per cent (90%) of children in care in the province are Indigenous. Manitoba is also one of the only provinces where children age out of care at 18 years old. The Indigenous Leaders know that they must go to the meeting tomorrow and defend their children.

The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) is the official democratic and self-governing political representative for the Métis Nation's Manitoba Métis Community. The Manitoba Métis are Canada's Negotiating Partner in Confederation and the Founders of the Province of Manitoba.

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. is a non-profit, political advocacy organization that has represented 30 First Nation communities in Manitoba's North since 1981.

Southern Chiefs Organization represents 34 Southern Manitoba First Nations.

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