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Southern Chiefs' Organization Welcomes Province of Manitoba Cutting Ties with B & L Resources

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is relieved to learn that the Government of Manitoba will end its relationship with B & L Resources for Children, Youth & Families, and will transition licensed foster homes out of the administrative umbrella of B&L to an appropriate Child and Family Services agency.

Southern First Nations' leadership has long been concerned with the services provided by B & L Resources. In particular, there have been concerns with the safety of southern First Nation children in care with this for-profit child and family services provider.

"The services provided by this organization were not culturally appropriate, and with the vast majority of the foster homes being non-Indigenous, our children were completely disconnected from their cultures, languages, and traditions", said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "The fact remains that removing First Nation children from their families, communities, and cultural surroundings is a tool of genocide, which directly contributes to the high number of Indigenous youth and adults facing incarceration, poverty, and multi-generational involvement in Manitoba's child welfare system."

Chief Cornell McLean of Lake Manitoba First Nation and Co-Chair of the SCO Chiefs' Standing Committee on Child Welfare commented that, "Our communities and child and family service agencies are capable of providing better quality and more appropriate service that will ensure our children are connected to their communities. We are ready to meet the challenges and demands posed by this sudden, but necessary, development in Manitoba child welfare."

Last September, the Southern Chiefs' Organization and MacDonald Youth Services signed an [historic MOU](#) to facilitate the creation of a governance and community care model that reflects the ongoing needs and aspirations of southern First Nations. "This judicious

collaboration is one example of the steps we are taking to pave the way for southern First Nations to assert jurisdiction over every aspect of care that our families receive when dealing with the child welfare system,” said Chief McLean.

Southern First Nation families have repeatedly raised concerns with B & L’s lack of response to sexual abuse allegations in their foster homes as well as other licensing deficiencies. “It was concerning, to say the least, that the province undertook its own review of this facility which is under provincial control. The findings of this review have not been made public, and the lack of public accountability is astounding, especially in light of those serious allegations within B&L foster homes,” said Chief Cameron Catcheway of Skownan First Nation, Member of the SCO Chiefs’ Standing Committee on Child Welfare.

Fifty-two percent of the children in care in Manitoba come from southern First Nations, and 90% of all children in care are Indigenous. Transferring control of some of these homes, and the associated resources, to southern First Nation child welfare agencies is a step in the right direction in restoring jurisdiction of child and family services to First Nation communities.

The Southern Chiefs’ Organization represents 34 First Nations that came together in 1999 to protect, preserve, promote, and enhance First Nations peoples’ inherent rights, languages, customs, and traditions through the application and implementation of the spirit and intent of the Treaty-making process.

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