



Information Sheet

First Steps in Fixing the Inequities in First Nations Child and Family Services: Immediate Action Reforms

Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach

(Applied in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia and PEI)

January 10, 2016

Introduction

The Federal Government of Canada funds First Nations child and family services on reserve through the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs [INAC] (previously the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada). INAC requires that First Nations child and family service agencies on reserve use provincial/territorial child welfare laws as a condition of funding. Within its First Nations Child and Family Services Program, INAC uses four child welfare funding approaches: 1) funding arrangements with provinces and territories; 2) Directive 20-1; 3) the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach [EPFA]; and 4) the 1965 Indian Welfare Agreement in Ontario.

In 2007, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (Caring Society) and the Assembly of First Nations filed a complaint pursuant to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* alleging that INAC's provision of First Nations child and family services is discriminatory (CHRT 7008/1340).

The case was filed as a last resort after the federal government failed to implement the recommendations of two reviews: 1) the Joint National Policy Review of First Nations Child and Family Services (2000) and 2) the Wen:de reports

(2005). After the case was filed, the Auditor General conducted two reviews and made recommendations for reform. Few were ever implemented.

In its closing submissions before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, the Caring Society put forward a three-phase remedy. The first phase provided immediate relief based on the prior recommendations. The second phase involved establishing a national committee composed of the Assembly of First Nations, the Caring Society, First Nations child and family service agencies and the Government of Canada to support regional negotiations to achieve substantive equity. The third phase involved establishing an independent oversight body to ensure the federal government does not slip back into discriminatory processes.

This information sheet summarizes the immediate actions INAC must take to provide immediate relief for First Nations children and families in regions where EPFA applies. This is not an exhaustive list and readers are encouraged to review all of the final written submissions filed by the parties in CHRT 7008/1340 available at www.fnwitness.ca for greater detail.

Immediate, Preliminary Reforms for EPFA

- 1) The Government of Canada to make an immediate and public statement that current inequalities in First Nations services on reserve are discriminatory and will be addressed as a matter of immediate priority. Such a statement must be accompanied with a pledge to work with First Nations, First Nations child and family service agencies and experts to develop a specific action plan with detailed timelines and budgets to immediately address inequalities in First Nations services on reserve and prevent the recurrence of discrimination.
- 2) Replacement of the federal government's current response to Jordan's Principle with the response recommended in the joint report by the Assembly of First Nations, Canadian Paediatric Society, UNICEF et al. available at: http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/jordans_principle-report.pdf
- 3) Provision of new financial resources for First Nations agencies across Canada as set out in the INAC 2012 presentation (CHRT Tab 248) in the amount of 109 million per annum plus the 3 percent inflation adjustment applied retroactively to 2012. While this amount falls short of what will be required to achieve equality in First Nations services on reserve, it provides at least some initial relief for the children and their families.
- 4) Approve child in care related legal expenses as an eligible expense under the maintenance budget and increase the maintenance budget to cover such costs.
- 5) Approve costs related to the receipt and investigation of child maltreatment reports at actual costs pending further review.
- 6) Reinstatement of the annual cost of living adjustment as per the Consumer Price Index.
- 7) Cessation of the INAC practice of taking funds from other First Nations programs such as housing, water and building schools to cover shortfalls in the education, child and family services and social assistance budgets.
- 8) Cease the practice of requiring First Nations agencies to recover cost overruns related to increases in the number of children in care from the prevention and operations funding streams.
- 9) Immediate reforms to the operations formula for First Nations child and family service funding so that:
 - a. The 6% of children in care and 20% of families receiving services are baseline assumptions in the funding approach and agencies serving above these baselines receive upward funding adjustments;
 - b. Replace the current operations registered child populations thresholds of 251, 501, 801 and 1000 in the operations formula with the recommended funding increments per every 25 children on reserve as recommended in Wen:de.
 - c. Increase the per child amount for prevention from \$100 per child to \$200 per child.
- 10) Make a commitment to work with the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Human Rights Commission to recall the National Advisory Committee and Regional Tables in order to conduct a study and

implement the findings to determine remaining inequities in the program and develop evidence informed responses to remedy the inequities and prevent their resurgence. This process must be informed by the success of the Wen:de study approach.

- 11) Fund agency building renovations by qualified contractors where facility conditions pose a health and safety hazard. Additional costs related to capital will need to be addressed at the regional tables in phase 2 of the remedy.
- 12) Mandatory training of all Government Members of Parliament regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (“TRC”) Report and Findings. Training for INAC staff and executive staff on the TRC report and findings as well as the First Nations Child and Family Service Program including the original structure of the program, overview of First Nations child welfare and reviews of the program.
- 13) Fund the development of culturally based practice standards and programs.

Rights of the Child (2012) expressed concern that the recommendations of the Auditor General of Canada had not been fully implemented.

- b) Standing Committee on Public Accounts (2009,* 2012).
- c) Internal INAC evaluations.

*Full reports available at:

<http://www.fncaresociety.com/i-am-witness-first-nations-child-and-family-services-funding>

Reviews of EPFA

- a) Auditor General of Canada (2008*, 2011). Found EPFA to be flawed and inequitable. The United Nations Committee on the

**For more information on the case go to
www.fnwitness.ca or contact info@fncaresociety.com**

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada | 309 Cooper Street, Suite 401, Ottawa ON K2P 0G5