



CHIEFS COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA CHIEFS COUNCIL ECHO CALL FOR CANADA TO 'PUT DOWN THEIR SWORD' DRAWN TOWARDS INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND DISCONTINUE LEGAL BATTLES AROUND UNDERFUNDING CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES ON RESERVE

THUNDER BAY, ON: Responding to the August 26, 2021 interim decision released by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) ordering the Government of Canada to pay the actual costs of capital purchases and/or constructions required to deliver child welfare services in First Nations communities and, the more recent September 29, 2021 decision of the Federal Court dismissing the Government of Canada's appeals of two of the orders from the CHRT in the case of *Canada v. First Nation Child and Family Caring Society of Canada*—the Matawa Chiefs Council offered the following statement:

"The Matawa Chiefs Council, welcomes the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's (CHRT) August 26, 2021 interim decision to pay the actual costs of capital purchases and/or constructions required to deliver child welfare services in First Nation communities and Federal Court Justice Paul Favel's September 29, 2021 ruling dismissing the Government of Canada's appeals of two orders from the CHRT.

*We will be very disappointed if the Government of Canada appeals Justice Favel's Federal Court decision of September 29, 2021 to the Supreme Court of Canada. Despite it being a typical legal practice normally undertaken for cases that are short and not close to 15 years in length—the **Government of Canada is not obligated to appeal cases lost**. We believe Canadians are tired of the unintended consequence of spending \$10 million on lost cases and are looking for a conclusion to this ongoing saga (see timeline here: <https://bit.ly/3msU5nh>). Last week, Canadians paused in reflection during the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We believe that they join Indigenous Peoples in the belief that swords should never be drawn towards children and should be put down immediately as a priority and concrete act towards the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action.*

In addition, we join Dr. Cindy Blackstock of the First Nation Child and Family Caring Society of Canada is asking our citizens and all Canadians to contact Members of Parliament (MP) in their electoral districts to call on Canada to withdraw their appeals and technical fights that undermine settlement. Within the Matawa region, these MPs are: Carol Hughes (Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing), Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay), Eric Melillo (Kenora), Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay-Superior North), and Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay-Rainy River).

Within the Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) organization—a dozen of professionals from the Awashishewiigiihiwaywiin (Social Services Framework), the Matawa Health Co-operative and the Matawa Education and Care Centre have responded to the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario's [Action Alert](#) asking Canada to stop fighting First Nation children in court and start concrete action on truth and reconciliation. The Matawa Chiefs Council urges everyone to do the same.

Within Matawa, we have seen the effects on our children that have come from a broken child welfare system. Our jurisdiction over children and families must be returned. Our children must be with their families and Nations, raised in our culture and languages and with the chance to grow up and be loved by our communities as First Nations children."

Since the case began, Canada has been hit with 9 non-compliance orders and have been found guilty of "willful and reckless" discrimination by knowingly underfunding child and family services on reserve. In September 2019, it ordered the federal government to pay \$40,000, the maximum the tribunal can award, to each First Nations child removed from their home after 2006, as well as to their parents, because of the discrimination. It was estimated that around 54,000 children and their parents could be eligible to receive compensation, which would likely cost the federal government more than \$2 billion.

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For more information, please contact Carol Audet, Communications Manager – Matawa First Nations at (807) 632-9663 or by email at: caudet@matawa.on.ca

Matawa Chiefs Council

- More information can be found in 'About Us' here: [Chiefs Council - Matawa](#)
- Members include:
 - Chief Solomon Atlookan, Eabametoong First Nation
 - Chief Dorothy Towedo, Aroland First Nation
 - Chief Ramona Sutherland, Constance Lake First Nation
 - Chief Sheri Taylor, Ginoogaming First Nation
 - Chief Judy Desmoulin, Long Lake #58 First Nation
 - Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation
 - Chief Sheldon Oskineegish, Nibinamik First Nation
 - Chief Cornelius Wabasse, Webequie First Nation
 - Chief Wayne Moonias, Neskantaga First Nation

