



Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta

To Protect, Promote, Bring to Life, Implement, and Sustain the True Spirit and Intent of Treaty No. 8 as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the waters flow.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Edmonton, Alberta – November 28, 2013 – Recently, the media has reported that fatalities of children in care in Alberta are alarmingly underreported by the Alberta Government. These articles have highlighted shocking gaps in both the child intervention system and the terrible fates of some children that are taken out of their homes. Some of these children come from communities across Treaty No. 8 [Alberta] and as such, the Chiefs of Treaty No. 8 [Alberta] are very concerned.

“We have quite a few children lost in the Alberta system, away from their communities and culture, where the assumption on what we have been told is that they are being treated well. These articles have left us to wonder if that is truly the case,” states Richard Kappo, Grand Chief of Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta.

Treaty No. 8 [Alberta] have been trying for many years to work with the Ministry of Human Services to become a part of the process for their children in care. “The problem is that we don’t have jurisdiction or control over our own children. We can’t help the situation when most of the time, we don’t even know where children from our communities have ended up. We want to be more actively involved so we can make sure these kids aren’t getting lost in the system or falling through the cracks,” states Chief Rose Laboucan, Portfolio Chief for Education.

Unfortunately, the tangled maze of rules and restrictions from the provincial and federal governments make it difficult to implement change. “Communities have solutions to improve outcomes for children and families. The problem is the rules, regulations and restrictions from government don’t allow us to implement these solutions. The system has so many people involved in it both provincially and federally that it is a bureaucratic mess,” states Grand Chief Kappo.

Band Designates were introduced in provincial legislation in 2004 as a solution, acting as liaisons between First Nations communities and the Ministry of Human Services, they were supposed to bridge the gaps in the system. Unfortunately, these positions were legally required but unfunded. Many First Nations ending up paying for the positions themselves and some First Nations just couldn’t afford it. “The Band Designates allow us to find out what has happened to our children when they are taken out of the communities and keep those that we find in touch with their language, culture and communities. It has been a positive step, but the only time we have received funding for this legally required position was this year, \$500,000.00 was given to the 24 communities in Treaty No. 8 by the Alberta Government, that’s \$21,000.00 per community. That isn’t nearly enough for the amount of work they need to do. As well, we have not been told that this funding will continue,” states Chief Laboucan. When it comes to funding, the province has stated that they feel it’s also the federal government’s responsibility for funding. The federal government says because these children are in care off-reserve, that it is the province’s job to fund it. “We are getting bounced around between the province and the feds, meanwhile it is the children who suffer,” states Chief Laboucan.

Treaty No. 8 [Alberta] is going to keep pushing for more control over the system that regulates their children in care, “we owe it to these children to make sure they are getting the chance and the opportunities they need. Many of these come from bad situations and it should be our job to make sure they aren’t ending up in a worse one. If they are Treaty 8 children then we need to ensure that we remain in their lives. They have a very distinct culture, community and history that they should be aware and proud of,” states Rose Laboucan.

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