



**AFNQL**  
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS  
QUEBEC-LABRADOR



**YUKON  
REGION**



January 15, 2025

AFN National Chief Cindy Woodhouse  
Assembly of First Nations  
50 O'Connor Street, Suite 200  
Ottawa, ON K1P 6L2

**Subject:** Regional Appointments to the National Children's Chief Commission and Affirming & Enforcing Resolution #60/2024 & #61/2024 for Long Term Reform of First Nations Child & Family Services

Dear National Chief Woodhouse,

We extend our gratitude to all parties for their dedication and tireless efforts in addressing Canada's longstanding discrimination against First Nations children and families in the Child and Family Services (FNCFS) system. While progress has been made, current circumstances continue to highlight the need for unwavering focus and collaboration to eliminate discrimination against First Nations children and families. As Regional Chiefs, we are guided by the mandate entrusted to us by the First Nations-in-Assembly, and it is essential that this mandate remains the foundation for achieving meaningful longterm reform of FNCFS.

The resolutions passed by the Chiefs-in-Assembly Assembly (#60/2024; #61/2024; #87/2024, #88/2024; #89/2024; #90/2024)—are clear and unambiguous. As stated in our previous correspondence [Oct 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024], these resolutions require the AFN to uphold the Chiefs' mandate by refraining from endorsing any agreements not thoroughly reviewed and approved by the Chiefs-in-Assembly (#60/2024, s.5). They also mandate collaboration with the regions to establish the National Children's Chiefs Commission (NCCC) and a new negotiations team, ensuring the process includes First Nations Child and Family Service experts, Elders, youth, and other critical stakeholders (#60/2024, s.12). Numerous regions have supported the drafting of the NCCC's workplan and terms of reference, and the AFN must provide full support to the NCCC in achieving an agreement aligned with Resolution #61/2024.

Your letter (January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025) to Dr. Blackstock, while noting her significant contributions, places undue emphasis on the Caring Society's role in securing an improved agreement, without fully acknowledging Canada's refusal to negotiate in good faith and their broader collective responsibilities. Canada's correspondence, referenced in your letter, highlights its unwillingness to engage beyond the Chiefs of Ontario (COO) and Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN), creating further division among regions. This approach undermines the Chiefs-in-Assembly's mandate and perpetuates systemic inequities.

We also note that your letter questions how the Caring Society intends to secure \$45 billion in CHRT-protected funding, negotiate the inclusion of off-reserve children, and address funding gaps for postmajority support services. These questions, while valid, overlook Canada's obligations to the CHRT, the Canadian Human Rights Act, and UNDRIP. It is Canada—not the Caring Society—that must be held accountable for meeting these commitments. Shifting this responsibility and stoking division undermines the collective efforts of the Chiefs-in-Assembly and regional leadership.

The Justice Canada letter dated January 14, 2025, further attempts to justify Canada's actions while failing to address the Chiefs-in-Assembly's concerns regarding equitable representation, stable funding, and inclusion for all First Nations children. Canada's decision to halt negotiations reflects a lack of commitment to good-faith engagement and its failure to uphold the honor of the Crown. Your comments and timing of this letter coinciding with the Justice Canada correspondence calls into question the required independence of the National Chief from the Liberal Party and the Government of Canada, writ large.

The NCCC, with 10 regional appointments to date, has been working diligently to fulfill its mandate. However, its progress is hindered by Canada's refusal to engage nationally and the lack of alignment between the AFN and the Chiefs-in-Assembly resolutions. We urge you to prioritize collaboration with the NCCC and regional representatives to ensure Canada returns to the table to address these critical issues. We want to be clear that it is the Regions who are advancing this work, not the Caring Society. The regions have been working diligently to advance the resolutions while assisting the NCCC in meeting their mandate. In fact, AFN supporting the NCCC would alleviate the reliance on the Regions filling a critical gap left by the AFN's inaction on this matter.

To address this inaction, we the undersigned AFN Regional Chiefs are prepared to support the NCCC at our next AFN executive meeting by introducing an AFN motion implementing the First Nations-in-Assembly Resolutions establishing the NCCC regarding LTR negotiations and the related legal proceedings to bring the AFN into alignment with the true spirit and intent of the resolutions passed by First Nations-in-Assembly

The Chiefs-in-Assembly's rejection of the Final Agreement was not made lightly. It was a call for a comprehensive, equitable, and inclusive process. It is critical that the AFN leadership respects this mandate and works alongside the NCCC to secure a meaningful pathway forward for long-term reform of FNCFS. Together, we can ensure that systemic discrimination is truly eradicated, and the dignity and rights of all First Nations children and families are upheld.

Respectfully,



Regional Chief Joanna Bernard





Regional Chief Ghislain Picard



Regional Chief Bobby Cameron



FSIN




Dene National Chief & Regional Chief George Mackenzie



Regional Chief Terry Teegee



**British Columbia  
Assembly of First Nations**



Regional Chief Kluane Adamek

