



First Nations Child & Family Caring Society statement: December 13, 2021.

In response to the statement from the Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, and the Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services regarding ongoing negotiations on compensation and long-term reform of First Nations child and family services and Jordan's Principle.

“This case is about First Nations children, youth and families. It is to them that we owe a sacred duty of ensuring their safety and well-being. We are committed to seeing through what the residential school survivors have made their top Calls-to-Action – ending the discrimination in child welfare and ensuring the full and proper implementation of Jordan's Principle. And there is still much work to be done.

Negotiations and discussions are ongoing and no agreements have been signed. While the Government of Canada's promise to put \$40 billion towards ending ongoing discrimination and compensating the children and families who were hurt is an important step, there are more legal steps to take before victims get the compensation they are owed and First Nations children get the services they deserve. Part of government reform and reconciliation is keeping promises to First Nations children, youth, families, and Nations.

The government is now paying a high price for not fixing its unequal funding of First Nations children's services. Credible concerns from the Government of Canada's own medical health inspector, Dr. PH Bryce, were raised as early as 1907, at a time when fixing the problem would have cost less than fifteen thousand dollars and saved the lives of countless children in residential schools. Over 20 years ago, fixing the inequalities would have only cost hundreds of millions. The price tag is so high today because the Government of Canada did not implement available solutions to address the serious harms to First Nations children and families, despite knowing about the problems for decades.

Let this be the lesson - that governments need to do better when they know better - the children and the country cannot pass the costs of discrimination down the road by choosing to ignore clear problems with clear solutions.

There remain many First Nations children and young adults who are facing inequalities in basic public services, from water to education, and there is important work remaining to end the discrimination in Canada's approach to child and family services and Jordan's Principle. They are owed a duty of justice that lives beyond monetary compensation. We must hear their voices and push for full implementation of the reforms necessary to ensure the discrimination stops NOW and that Canada does not hurt another generation of children again.

We will continue our efforts to implement reform of Indigenous Services Canada, to end the injustice and secure a safe, bright and promising future for First Nations children and families.”

- Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada