



For Immediate Release

Child welfare report has it right: Madahbee

UOI OFFICES (Nipissing First Nation) July 21, 2011 – Anishinabek Nation leaders are applauding a provincial government report that recommends that First Nations have more funding and jurisdiction in the management of children in care.

“It is our inherent right to take care of our own children,” said Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee, commenting on the Aboriginal Advisor’s Report on the status of Aboriginal child welfare in Ontario.

Released this week by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the report by former Anishinabek Grand Council Chief John Beaucage says First Nations need to have more say in how their children are taken into care, and more resources to adequately fund the process.

“Children need to come first,” said Madahbee. “There are more children in care now than at any time in Canadian history – including the Residential School era. This is a Millennium Scoop and it has to stop.”

The Anishinabek Nation has drafted its own Child Welfare Law with anticipated implementation in 2013. The main focus of the law is to ensure that First Nations children are being provided culturally-appropriate care.

“If First Nations children do need to be in care, they should first be placed with First Nation families, extended families, be kept in the communities and in the nation,” said Madahbee. “How are we to retain our language and culture if our children are shipped out?”

According to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the people concerned.

“The report also talks about resources for capacity-building for the Band Representative position,” said Madahbee. “INAC has to step up to the plate and designate core funding and capacity dollars to Child Welfare. The Band Representative Program funding must be re-instated by the Minister of Indian Affairs to ensure that First Nations can adequately advocate for their children.”

The report can be found on the Ministry of Children and Youth Services website and also on www.anishinabek.ca under the Social Services program.

The Anishinabek Nation established the Union of Ontario Indians as its secretariat in 1949. The UOI is a political advocate for 39 member communities across Ontario, representing approximately 55,000 people. The Union of Ontario Indians is the oldest political organization in Ontario and can trace its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires, which existed long before European contact.

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