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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **MKO & Manitoba hosting meeting on Child Welfare Reform that will be first step in fixing system**

**Treaty One Territory** – The Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) will be hosting an information-gathering assembly on Child Welfare Reform on March 5 & 6 on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. The Province of Manitoba has provided financial support for the meeting with the hope that northern First Nations and the MKO will be able to provide information and ideas that will lead to a child welfare system that better meets the needs of families in the Keewatinowi region.

The general assembly on child welfare reform will be held at the Kikiwak Inn and have a solutions-based focus in sharing local experience and best practices. The agenda for the meeting features expert panels, discussions with youth who have experienced the child welfare system, and input from attendees. Everyone is invited to attend the meeting.

The meeting comes as Canada has promised an infusion of funds into First Nations' child welfare due to decades of a funding shortfall that created much inequality in programming and services when compared to Canadian communities of similar size. This lack of financial resources for First Nations meant a dearth of the social services when it came to family supports, personal improvement programs like anger management or anti-addictions training, and a Child and Family Services system that removed children to reduce government liability.

The Province of Manitoba has promised the MKO that it will work with northern First Nations to create a system that meets the needs of northern families. Finding local solutions to local child welfare issues is crucial to making a successful CFS system.

#### Quotes

“For too long, the child welfare system has not had the tools, policies and financial support to effectively help First Nations families. There are indications from the federal government that funding shortfall will end soon. Dumping this new funding into a broken system will help nobody. It is time to go to First Nation communities, ask them what they need, listen to their experiences and, once we have those ideas and best practices, create a system that has the proper funding, that has effective policies, that has the needs of the local people at the center of its mandate. This meeting at Opaskwayak in March is just the first step in this process.”

- Sheila North, Grand Chief of the MKO

“Place province’s quote here”

- Scott Fielding, Minister of Families, Province of Manitoba

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*~Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. is a non-profit, political advocacy organization that has represented 30 First Nation communities in Manitoba’s North since 1981~*

