



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Response to Special Report on Child Maltreatment from the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. is issuing this statement regarding the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (Manitoba Advocate) special report called *Still Waiting: Investigating Child Maltreatment after the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry*.

This new report examines the lives of 19 children who died after being severely maltreated while under the age of 5 during the period 2008 and 2020. This new report was published about seven years after *The Legacy of Phoenix Sinclair: Achieving the Best for All Our Children* – the final report from the inquiry led by Commissioner Ted Hughes, which outlines 62 recommendations to better protect Manitoba children after the death of 5-year-old Phoenix in June 2005.

“In reading the Manitoba Advocate’s most recent special report, it saddens my heart to learn of the 19 child deaths,” said **Grand Chief Garrison Settee**. “One child death is too many. On behalf of the MKO communities, I acknowledge the child deaths and extend my sincere condolences and prayers to the families and communities who have lost a loved one.”

The Manitoba Advocate’s special report tracks the province’s progress on the 62 recommendations outlined in the Phoenix Sinclair report and makes 5 more recommendations for child safety and system change. These recommendations are directed to the provincial government and the child and family services authorities. They include: implement all Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry recommendations; fund parenting programs and resources in Manitoba communities; improve reunification practices and supports; audit reunification plans regularly to ensure families are supported; and train social workers on child maltreatment and reunification best practices.

The special report indicates the provincial government has made progress on only 55 per cent of the 62 recommendations from the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry. At the current rate of progress, it will be 2028 before all the recommendations are completed. It also notes systemic inequities and social determinants of health were contributing factors in the child deaths. More resources and improved supports for families and communities in Manitoba are needed to help to prevent child maltreatment.

“While significant changes have been made in Manitoba’s child welfare system over the last 20 years, much more prevention work needs to be done to improve outcomes for our children and youth in the MKO communities,” stated Grand Chief Settee.

“Currently, under the new federal law, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, which came into effect in January 2020, the MKO Child Welfare Secretariat is engaging with our leadership and communities to assert and exercise our inherent rights and jurisdiction over child welfare,” said Grand Chief Settee. “Through the development and implementation of our own legislation for child welfare, we will better serve our children, youth, and families in the MKO communities.”

The MKO Child Welfare Secretariat will collaborate with the relevant organizations to ensure the recommendations outlined in the Manitoba Advocate’s special report are addressed.

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