



Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

Allison Bond  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Child and Family Development

Via Email

**Re: Proposed Amendments to the Child, Family and Community Services Act (CFCSA)**

**Ref. 236639**

Dear Deputy Minister Bond,

Thank you for your recent letter concerning proposed changes to the *Child Family and Community Services Act*. (CFCSA). The BC Métis Federation is indeed encouraged to see changes happening within the system to better protect our Métis children, families and communities.

We are very familiar with the the report submitted by Grand Chief Ed John and have read and studied in thoroughly. It is our understanding that the Provincial Government had promised to implement all of his recommendations. We are also very familiar with the articles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

In your letter you state that you are interested in working together with the Indigenous communities in a better way in order to support the children that are before us now. We too are interested in protecting our children with immediate action.

We must make it clear from the outset that when you speak of community involvement you must make a distinction between Métis, First Nations, and Inuit communities and within those you must recognize that each community is responsible for its own members. One community cannot be delegated to speak on behalf of another nor should there be any suggestion that any Indigenous children and family agency represents our interest. MCFD cannot sign an agreement with one community and expect the other Indigenous community to quietly stand by and allow the other group to make decisions concerning our Métis children.

Therefore, BC Métis Federation does not and will not accept any other Métis group speaking on our behalf concerning our children. Any consultation concerning our children should be done directly through our office and our BC Métis Federation child welfare department will be happy to communicate with you regarding what we feel is in the best interest of our children and our community. This is in line with UNDRIP and the *Constitution Act*.

With regard to the sections of Grand Chief Ed John's Report that you suggest to include in the revised CFCSA, we note that you have included recommendation numbers 6, 8, 9, 12, 18, 41, 44, 50, 70, and 71.

We also note that you have excluded many others. The CFCSA is a valuable document to be used as a general guideline but is in need of updating. However, we also note that legislation is only valuable if it is used as a tool in the best interest of children and families. All too often, however, we have found that it is used as a tool to protect the Director instead of the Métis children.

The sections you have proposed, though useful, do not effect real change for our Métis families and communities. Unless there is a real desire to change on the part of the MCFD and Indigenous social workers who have worked their careers engaging in 60's scoop mentality and continue with these practices under the guise of exceptions committees and contracted designated Indigenous groups, there can be no real change for our people and another generation of our children will be lost.

You speak of consultation with Indigenous groups and you speak of respecting our customs, but you have neglected to include sections 40, 48, 49, and 50 of Ed John's Recommendations. These sections deal directly with what we hold precious and sacred. If there is legitimate interest by the Provincial Government to make effective change and to show our people that your intentions are genuine, these sections must be included in proposed amendments to the CFCSA. These sections include preserving the relationship between children and their parents and respecting our Constitutional right to exercise our customs and traditions through custom adoptions. These adoptions are part of our way of life and government interference will no longer be tolerated.

One of our own children, Métis child known as SS is still being held in foster care across the country when she has been adopted by our traditional Métis custom. Meanwhile the Provincial Government speaks of reconciliation yet still spends millions in court fighting this adoption and no one will engage with our Métis community concerning our child. As stated earlier, designated agencies who are not part of our community have no business speaking for our BC Métis Federation community without our direct consultation and involvement.

We understand that you say that this work is just beginning. But these added sections that respect our way of life and our traditions can be added quickly and easily. Custom adoption is recognized on your website and in the *BC Adoption Act*. Yet despite these policy statements it appears not a single custom adoption has been recognized in BC Courts since 1996.

We are not interested in veiled attempts to placate the Indigenous population; it is time for action. It would be preferable to work in collaboration, but we will not stand by and allow another generation of Métis children in our community to be damaged by Provincial Government interference. We must work with the goal of protecting the most vulnerable, our Métis children. Therefore, once again I stress to please add to the CFCSA the suggested sections concerning family preservation and an easier way of recognizing our Métis custom adoptions for the benefit of our children.

It is time for government litigation to cease and for our focus to be bringing our children home.  
Let's work together.

Sincerely,



Keith Henry  
President

cc BC Métis Federation Members