

PRESS RELEASE

June 28, 2019

Nova Scotia Chiefs Respond to New Federal Law Respecting First Nations Children, Youth & Families

The Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs (Assembly) are pleased with Canada's decision on Bill C-92 which has now become the first federal law in the area of child welfare - an Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. Today, the Federal Government has begun to acknowledge that the humanitarian crisis for Indigenous children in Canada needs to be addressed and rectified.

This Act will provide new tools for the child welfare system in Nova Scotia and recognizes the importance of cultural continuity to the well-being of a child and their community as whole, as well as the factors to be considered when looking at the Best Interest of an Indigenous child.

"We are welcoming the positive change that this new law brings to our Indigenous communities," said Chief Paul J. Prosper, Justice Lead for the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. "Most importantly, this recognizes our inherent right to govern ourselves."

For years, the Assembly has called upon the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to address changes to child welfare that First Nations communities across Canada have collectively brought forward.

"We have been working on child welfare matters since 2014 and we can now fully proceed to have Mi'kmaq laws for Mi'kmaq children in Nova Scotia," continued Chief Prosper. "With the amendments to Bill C-92, we welcome Canada's new approach – one that is also begins to recognize The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

It is imperative that the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia look at ways to protect our most vulnerable – our children. For far too long, our children have been removed from their families, homes and communities. As a result, we have lost our language, our culture, and our identity. The goal of the Assembly is to ensure that our children are safe in their own communities.

"Now that our inherent rights to become self-governing in the area of child welfare have been recognized in federal legislation, our people can begin to heal from the harms that have taken place. We are also excited to learn that the federal government did accept part of our submissions on Bill C-92 to include a specific provision for funding, as the recognition of the inherent right to self-govern can only be meaningfully exercised with adequate funding," said Chief Prosper.

-30-

For more information contact:

Crystal Dorey

Communications Manager

Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office

902-843-3880

crystaldorey@mikmaqrights.com