

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

September 8, 2023

### **FNLC Statement on the Failures of MCFD in Permanency Planning Obligations to Youth in Care**

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) This week B.C. Ombudsperson Jay Chalke released a [report](#) titled “MISINFORMED: How the Ministry of Children and Family Development failed in its permanency planning obligations to a youth in care.”

The Ombudsperson investigated the case of Alexandra, a youth who was in and out of the foster system until she entered a permanency agreement at age 17 and found that she was misinformed by MCFD regarding the impact of permanency on her ability to access government supports for youth who have aged out of care, particularly around post-secondary education support.

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) expresses deep concern and disappointment regarding the Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) failure to fulfill its permanency planning obligations to youth in care and stubborn refusal to follow some of the ombudsperson's critical recommendations. MCFD is refusing to compensate Alexandra for the education funding that she was led to believe she would have access to, and also refusing to do an audit to ensure that other youths have not been placed in similar situations of unknowingly giving up access to post-majority supports by entering into permanency agreements. These failures not only violate the rights of the youth but also highlight the systemic issues that First Nations children and families face within the child welfare system, given that First Nations children comprise a disproportionately high number of children in the child welfare system.

The FNLC calls upon MCFD to immediately rectify the harm caused by their failures in permanency planning for Alexandra and potentially other youth, as recommended by the Ombudsperson. Permanency agreements are often a strong option to support First Nations children remaining with their kin; however, MCFD must ensure that entering into such agreements does not take away post-majority supports, and ensure that families and youth are fully made aware of the legal ramifications of permanency agreements. It is essential that they actively engage and collaborate with First Nations communities, Knowledge Keepers and leaders to research, develop and implement culturally appropriate strategies that prioritize the well-being and future of First Nations children and youth.

Furthermore, the FNLC urges the Ministry to address systemic barriers within the child welfare system that continue to have significant impacts on First Nations families. The ministry should make every effort to conduct an audit by gathering available data to understand deficiencies and flaws in its record-keeping. It is imperative that the ministry takes accountability for its actions and demonstrates



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a willingness to change. They must provide necessary resources and supports to vulnerable children and youth who have been adversely affected by the ministry's neglect and misinformation.

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*The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).*

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