



## BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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### BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Resolution 23/2019

Musqueam Community Centre, Xʷməθkʷəṅəm, Vancouver, BC  
September 18-20, 2019

**SUBJECT:** CALL TO ACTION TO CEASE THE REMOVAL OF NEWBORNS FROM HOSPITALS

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**MOVED BY:** CHIEF DONNA ALJAM, NICOMEN INDIAN BAND

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**SECONDED BY:** KUKPI7 WAYNE CHRISTIAN, SPLASTIN

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**DECISION:** CARRIED

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#### WHEREAS:

- A. Indigenous women and families are frequently and disproportionately targeted by the practice of hospital alerts, which involves targeting and removing newborn infants from their parents immediately postnatal;
- B. The removal of a newborn infant at birth is one of the most intrusive measures that can be taken and one which has lasting impacts upon the emotional and physical bond between parents and their children;
- C. The Ministry of Children and Family Development has committed to cease the practice of "Birth Alerts" which involve an alert being placed on a mother prenatal, however, this does not address or prevent an alert and subsequent removal of the child once the mother has given birth;

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Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2019, at the Musqueam Community Centre, Xʷməθkʷəṅəm, Vancouver, BC

A blue ink signature of Terry Teegee, the BC Regional Chief.

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Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

D. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC committed to implement, affirms:

**Article 2:** Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

**Article 21(2):** States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

**Article 22 (2):** States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination;

E. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action, which have been supported by the Chiefs of BC and Canada, call upon governments to address the colonial legacy and humanitarian crisis created by child welfare through the systematic removal of children from their parents, families and communities, and subsequent denial of their rights;

F. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice, which "represent important ways to end the genocide and to transform systemic and societal values that have worked to maintain colonial violence," stated at Call 12.8:

I. We call upon provincial and territorial governments and child welfare services for an immediate end to the practice of targeting and apprehending infants (hospital alerts or birth alerts) from Indigenous mothers right after they give birth;

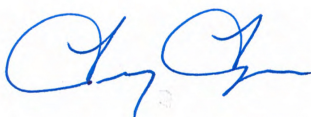
G. *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, which received Royal Assent on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019, places priority on preventative and prenatal care:

I. **14(1):** In the context of providing child and family services in relation to an Indigenous child, to the extent that providing a service that promotes preventive care to support the child's family is consistent with the best interests of the child, the provision of that service is to be given priority over other services.

II. **14(2):** To the extent that providing a prenatal service that promotes preventive care is consistent with what will likely be in the best interests of an Indigenous child after he or she

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Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

is born, the provision of that service is to be given priority over other services in order to prevent the apprehension of the child at the time of the child's birth; and

H. By BCAFN Resolution 06/2017 "First Nations Jurisdiction over Children and Families":

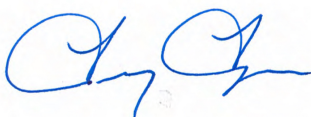
- I. Recognizes that each First Nation has the right to determine and develop their own child welfare models, legislation, regulations, policies and practice standards, and fully support any and all First Nations in exercising their respective jurisdiction and authority over the care and well-being of their children and families;
- II. Fully supports any and all First Nations' efforts to exercise and secure recognition of their jurisdiction and authority over children and families;
- III. Fully supports all Indigenous Nations' inherent Right to care for their children, a Right protected by the Constitution of Canada and recognized by the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly fully support First Nations in the exercise of their inherent rights of self-determination and self-government, and their inherent right to care for their children, youth, and families;
2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the BC Regional Chief, working with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council, to advocate for a comprehensive strategy to immediately address and cease the practice of removing newborns from their parents as First Nations transition to the resumption of their full and inherent jurisdiction over child and family services;
3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the BC Regional Chief, working with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council, to call upon British Columbia to take concrete and immediate actions to address the cultural and systemic bias toward Indigenous mothers and families, including increased accountability measures for social workers and healthcare professionals; and
4. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the BC Regional Chief, working with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council, to call upon Canada and BC to develop and implement a strategic funding strategy with a focus on prenatal and prevention services for new and expectant Indigenous parents.

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**Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief**