



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Road
Prince George, BC V2K 5S3
Website: www.bcafn.ca

BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
October 8, 9 & 10, 2024
Hybrid - In person & online via Zoom

Resolution 24/2024

SUBJECT: CALL TO SUPPORT THE CREATION OF A JOHNSON ALERT FOR MISSING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

MOVED BY: CHIEF JEN THOMAS, TSLEIL-WAUTUTH NATION

SECONDED BY: CHIEF LYNDY PRICE, ULKATCHO FIRST NATION

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

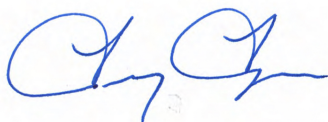
- A. The BCAFN recognizes and affirms that First Nations are the custodians of their culture, lands, and waters; that many localized systems and approaches to communicate to Members within Nations already exist; and that individual Nations are unique and committed to the protection and well-being of First Nation children with disabilities and without;
- B. Most recently, many First Nation leaders as well as the general population of the province of BC witnessed, that when a child goes missing, First Nation family members and Communities are left to organize and carry out complex missing child searches with little institutional supports or organizational capacity and funding during a period of profound distress and trauma;
- C. In September 2024 Oaklynn Schweder and Johnson Redhead, members from two First Nations communities, one in northern British Columbia and the other in northern Manitoba, went missing. The two children were on the autism spectrum, and both were non-verbal and did not have the Amber Alert system activated for their cases, as the circumstances for their disappearances did not meet the established criteria;

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- D. The historical negligence from police and other organizations in cases of missing First Nations children, people and violence towards First Nations people, police regularly demonstrate apathy, jurisdictional disorganization, mismanagement and miscommunication, and perpetuate centuries of mistrust between First Nations people and the police;
- E. Historical and recent events of missing and vulnerable persons have cast a light the longstanding gaps in BC's resourcing of search and rescue (SAR) supports for First Nations people and the requirements for a localized yet national framework of support: a cross-country multi-jurisdictional coordinated response to missing persons, human trafficking, and the MMIWG calls to justice; real-time case management with the ability to integrate timely sharing of information concerning those who go missing, to ensure their safe return to their families and community.
- F. 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, passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:
Article 7(1): Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.
(2): Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.
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.
Article 23: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them, and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions;
- G. Public alerting systems are meant to provide a means of delivering trusted information to notify the affected population so that they understand the incident and risk and can take responsive protective actions;
- H. There are different types of tools and channels that can be used to notify the public during emergencies. Although, there are a number of factors that need to be considered to determine the most appropriate mechanisms for distributing missing children alerts to realize the desired outcomes;
- I. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) commissioned a public opinion research survey [in 2021](#), which found Amber Alerts – most Canadians are satisfied (83%) and most agree on the safety aspect for children (93%); reasons for

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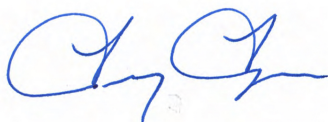


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dissatisfaction include the alert does not apply to their area (35%), not receiving the alert at all (18%), alert sounds waking them up (18%), being too loud (7%) or not knowing how to turn it off (7%). Despite dissatisfaction, most Canadians believe Amber Alerts should remain province or territory-wide (79%) and that alerts should be received by everyone (86%);

- J. Issuing an Amber Alert is intended for the most vulnerable and that should include children with disabilities as they have varying complex needs, and without knowing their location, their life could be in grave danger. In the Province of BC, there is not currently an alert for children with disabilities;
- K. Amber Alerts are one of the most well-known alerts sent through the National Public Alerting System and other alerting channels. They are issued by law enforcement when a child under the age of 18 has been abducted, and it is believed that his/her life is in grave danger. An Amber Alert provides the public with immediate and up-to-date information about the abduction and solicits the public's help in the safe and swift return of the child;
- L. Another example of an alert for missing persons is the Silver Alert, which aids to assist in locating missing elderly who have neurological conditions, such as dementia. This type of Alert is being piloted through the National Public Alerting System in three regions in Quebec;
- M. In order for a Silver Alert to be issued, the following criteria must be met: the missing person has a diagnosis of TNC-M (Troubles Neurocognitive Majeurs – Major neurocognitive issues) or, if at least 60 years of age, has symptoms of TNC-M, confirmed by relatives or close caregiver; there is an imminent risk to the missing person's life; the person remains unaccounted for despite the efforts of the police, and the police believe that issuing an intrusive alert would be the most efficient way to obtain the public's assistance in locating the person under the circumstances; and, here is sufficient information about the missing person (i.e., identity information) and the context of his or her disappearance (including means of transportation if applicable and last location seen) that immediate dissemination of this information to the public could assist in the rapid recovery of the person;
- N. Other mechanisms to notify the public when children go missing do not use the national public alert system. They can be regionally or locally based and be issued through Mass Notification systems, applications, media, and/or websites;
- O. Access to the National Public Alerting System is limited to persons designated by a government authority with clear and direct jurisdiction over a public safety or emergency management function;
- P. Issuing authority is defined in the Broadcast Distribution Regulations, Television Broadcasting Regulations, 1987, and Radio Regulation, 1986. Issuing authority means any person who is authorized by a Canadian governmental authority — including the federal Department of the

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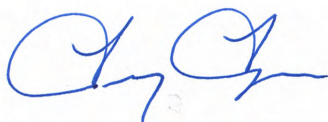
Environment, federal and provincial government departments and agencies that are responsible for emergency management and public safety, and municipal authorities — to issue warnings to the public, and to the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination System, announcing danger to life or property;

- Q. While alerts issued through the National Public Alert System can only be issued by authorized government authorities — such as law enforcement in the case of Amber alerts -- other alert systems allow other authorities (such as community leaders) to issue alerts or can issue notifications of missing persons based on reports by family or friends directly.
- A. Under the National Public Alert System, Provincial and Territorial Emergency Management Organizations (EMO) are responsible for how they run their public alerting program, including whether they provide access to agencies (police, fire, municipalities, etc) within their jurisdiction, if they centralize alert issuance through the EMO, or a hybrid approach.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Provincial and Federal Governments and relevant agencies to implement a Johnson alert system (named after Johnson Redhead), a new missing child alert system, similar to the Amber Alert, to address disparities regarding the protection of First Nations children;
2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Provincial and Federal Government to provide equitable funding for the creation and operational capacity of a Johnson Alert system for Missing Children with Disabilities;
3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly directs the Regional Chief to advocate with like-minded organizations, that responds to the range of barriers for First Nations to administer alerts for missing children, in particular, children with Disabilities;
4. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly affirms the urgent need to improve capacity for First Nations in BC to carry out their own effective and efficient Missing Children Alert systems within their jurisdiction in alignment with the UN Declaration; and
5. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on the Province of British Columbia to:
 - add First Nations in BC, or the designated First Nations entity of their choice, with their consent, to the list of Requesting Agencies in order be able to initiate missing children alerts and access existing Ground Search and Rescue services in the same manner as other Requesting Agencies; and

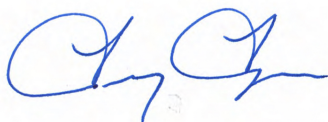
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- develop a tool kit and training program for First Nations seeking to develop independent Missing Person/Children Alert protocols.

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