



Press Release

Indigenous Youth Leaving Foster Care Left Homeless During COVID-19

April 1, 2020 (Ottawa, ON) – Despite provincial ministers’ claims, youth aging out of the foster care system continue to be thrown out on the street, even in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) National Vice-Chief, Kim Beaudin.

“The Canadian government implemented Bill C-92 to hand over responsibility of First Nations welfare to First Nations Bands and tribal councils” said CAP National Vice-Chief Kim Beaudin. “Premiers and Social Services Ministers across Canada will not commit to ensuring housing for Indigenous youth leaving care, despite the threat of COVID-19 and stay at home orders across the country.”

Bill C-92 provides resources for Indigenous communities recognized under the Indian Act and holding rights under Section 35 of the Constitution of Canada. It does not provide resources to other Indigenous groups, or provide avenues to oversee child welfare services in their communities.

“Bill C-92 and the government’s COVID-19 response are the result of a flawed process which excluded the off-reserve and non-status communities” said CAP National Chief Robert Bertrand. “The government of Canada’s distinctions-based approach continues to create policies that leave off-reserve and non-Status Indigenous people falling through the cracks.”

Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Inquiry included calls that Indigenous youth removed from families be placed into Indigenous-run, adequately resourced child welfare systems, and that transition programs exist for youth “aging out”. Despite these needs being identified, Indigenous youth continue to be held in under-resourced provincial systems with no transition plan from foster care to self-sufficiency.

Throwing youth, most of whom are indigenous, onto the streets when they age out of foster care carries a high risk of serious harm to their mental and physical health. With every province in Canada issuing social distancing and stay at home orders for the general public, lack of a home makes it impossible for youth to follow those orders, and threatens public health.

Since 1991, Canada has been a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and in 2016 signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Despite these commitments, Canada has not lived up to its obligations towards Indigenous youth.

Despite reports such as the Truth and Reconciliation Report, and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and report, provincial governments continue to follow archaic policies which throw Indigenous children out on the street, in some cases even under the age of 18, “I would like to know where they expect our youth to go?” says Kim Beaudin.

For media interviews please contact:

Jessica Dawson, Executive Assistant

613-747-6022

j.dawson@abo-peoples.org

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the national voice representing the interests of Métis, status and non-status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous People living off-reserve. Today, over 80% of Indigenous people live off reserve.