



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
July 9, 2020
BC Directors Forum

Indigenous Child Welfare Directors oppose involuntary Detainment of Indigenous Children

Proposed changes to the Mental Health Act will harm, not help Indigenous Youth.

"I am fearful that the proposed changes to the Mental Health Act will create a new pipeline of our kids into care" said Mary Teegee of the proposed changes to the Mental Health Act."

Indigenous children are already disproportionately taken into the child welfare system. The detainment of Indigenous children in hospitals will undoubtedly lead to child welfare involvement in families. The conditions created by this legislation could replicate the recently phased out birth alert system whereby hospital workers trigger child welfare involvement often resulting in removals. These conditions, paired with known systemic racism in BC's healthcare system will harm, not help Indigenous children.

Under the proposed legislation Indigenous youth will also be less likely to call emergency services out of fear that they will be detained, or their friends and relatives will be detained. "We are hearing from youth that they just won't call for help- out of fear and a lack of trust in the system."

Rather than detaining children and putting them in harm's way, Delegated Aboriginal Agencies proposed additional resources for adequate culturally safe wellness and mental health services for Indigenous youth that can curb the need to consider involuntary detention of Indigenous youth.

"We know from experience that anything which forces rather than facilitates a healing journey, no matter how well intentioned is unlikely to stick." said Teegee

Mary Teegee is the Executive Director of Carrier Sekani Child and Family services and Chair of the Directors Forum, a coalition of executives responsible for managing the 24 delegated Aboriginal Agencies in BC, agencies representing 60% of First Nations in the province.

Media contact:

Mary Teegee
Ph: 250-612-8710