



# Grand Council Treaty #3

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Ogichidaa Francis Kavanaugh Relieved by Suspension of Hunger Strike**

Ogichidaa Francis Kavanaugh is relieved to hear of the suspension of the hunger strike by an elder of Migisi Sahgaigan First Nation. The elder had been on a hunger strike since October 9 in a statement against the current state of the child welfare systems in Canada.

“I have heard her concerns and share many of them,” said Ogichidaa Francis Kavanaugh. “I understand her frustration and how the current system can often leave families feeling voiceless and helpless. Child welfare is perhaps the most complex issue we face, but I want to always reiterate that all of our people are working towards reforming the system in the best interests of children. The effective reform of the system requires the best efforts of all our people, and I hope she can be a part of that.”

Grand Council Treaty #3 is unable to name the elder due to regulations prohibiting the public identification of children in the system.

Grand Council Treaty #3, the Anishinaabe Nation leadership, service providers, and community members are all working to address these issues in the child welfare system. The Anishinaabe Nation in Treaty #3 is ahead of much of the rest of the country in asserting its jurisdiction over child welfare. Development of Anishinaabe Abinoojii Inakonigewin, the Treaty #3 child welfare law, began in 2005 and since then its implementation has taken the Treaty #3 territory further ahead than most other regions across Canada. In fact, the child welfare agencies in the Treaty #3 territory have provided other nations with the best practices to address the issues within their own systems.

The complexity of child welfare means that rushing the process would likely result in replacing the current system with one that is just as poor, if not worse. A large part of this effort is ensuring that each individual community has its needs met by extensively engaging with community members to chart the path forward.

At the current stage, each community in Treaty #3 was allocated \$18,000 to begin their ascension to Abinoojii Inakonigewin. Each community is therefore at its own point in this journey and each community must take the adequate time to engage its citizens.

“There is no doubt in my mind that it is a priority of the entire nation to address the very serious problems in the child welfare system. Here in Treaty #3, a standalone process means the Anishinaabe Nation is not hindered by many of the hurdles faced by other nations across the country. But as development continues to progress, government partners have not yet committed funding to the actual establishment of a system following our own laws and traditions. This is the next step.”

As the development of Anishinaabe Abinoojii Inakonigewin continues, Grand Council Treaty #3 and all its partners will continue to engage with community members at every step of the law’s development.

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