



**YUKON
REGION**

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News Release

AFN Yukon Regional Office Regional Chief Kluane Adamek

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek responds to \$40B Agreement-in-Principle on compensation for First Nations impacted by discriminatory child welfare system

Whitehorse, Yukon – AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek expresses gratitude and cautious optimism in response to Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) on compensation for First Nations children and families and long-term reforms of the child welfare system

“First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and thank each of the First Nation children and families from coast-to-coast-to-coast who have bravely shared their stories of the discrimination they have faced – and continue to face – at the hands of Canada’s racist child welfare system. Thank you to Dr. Cindy Blackstock, who has been a true champion for First Nation children and families wronged by the discriminatory systems of the Canadian government. Finally, thank you to my colleagues from the AFN National Executive, including Manitoba Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse and National Chief Roseanne Archibald, who worked tirelessly over the last several weeks to ensure this Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) was reached. I raise my hands to each of you, as well as the many other First Nation leaders and experts who dedicated their time and energy to collaborating on this AIP in honour of First Nation children past, present, and future.

Yesterday, I was encouraged as I watched leaders from across the country – First Nation and Non-First Nation alike – sit side by side to share the details of this \$40 billion AIP for compensation of First Nation children and families impacted by Canada’s discriminatory child welfare system. The AIP dedicates approximately \$20 billion to compensating First Nation children, families and caregivers who were discriminated against and harmed by the child welfare system, and \$19.8 billion over five years that will be dedicated to reforming the current child welfare system.

The dramatic overrepresentation of First Nation children in the Canadian welfare system is a painful reality that all First Nations are acutely aware of, and action to address this systemic discrimination is long overdue. Time and time again we have heard political apologies for the countless crimes and violations of human rights that have been endured by First Nation peoples, and I welcome federal commitments to finally compensate the children, siblings, parents, uncles, aunties and grandparents who have been separated by this incredibly harmful system.

In Canada, a First Nation child is 17.2 times more likely to be placed in foster care than a non-First Nation child¹; a reality made possible by a series of compounding social, cultural, economic, and health-related inequities. These inequities vary across all regions, provinces and territories in Canada, including the Yukon, where all 14 First Nations face unique challenges related to housing, access to health and social services, extremely high living costs, legacies of intergenerational trauma from residential schools, and more. Thus, it is my expectation that part of the AIP's \$19.8 billion for reforms to the current child welfare system will go toward meaningful community-led engagements, ensuring that Yukon First Nations see their interests reflected in these reforms. I look forward to working closely with the AFN National Executive and our federal partners to ensure that each of the 14 YFNs have their voices heard when it comes to spending this \$19.8 billion in a stable and community-driven way. I will continue to work with Yukon First Nation Leadership as we follow and analyze how these agreements will support Yukon First Nations and their citizens.

While we heard federal ministers share their commitments and messages of support for this AIP, it is not yet binding. That means that we must continue to hold the federal government accountable for the commitments they have made to respect, listen to, and compensate First Nation families and children whose lives and futures have been derailed by this racist system. I appreciate the support of Ministers Hadju, Miller and Lametti who have demonstrated a willingness to listen to and work with those harmed by the child welfare system. However while I appreciate their words, I will continue to push them and their respective ministries for action; to take a closer look at the factors that have allowed this discriminatory system to function for so long under the supervision of the federal government.

I share the expectations of many other First Nation leaders across the country that this AIP will be finalized by March 31, 2022, and that the \$40 billion will begin to reach the pockets of First Nations children and families before the end of 2022. There is no dollar amount that can give time back to parents and children who were torn apart, nor will any amount of money erase the deep traumas endured by the generations of First Nations children taken by the child welfare system.

However, it is my hope that this AIP will support the intergenerational healing needed so badly by First Nation families and communities, bringing an end to this discriminatory system so that future generations will grow up surrounded by the family, culture, language, community and love that all children deserve.”

¹ [FNCIS-2019 - Denouncing the Continued Overrepresentation of First Nations Children in Canadian Child Welfare - Final_1 \(1\).pdf \(cwrp.ca\)](#)

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