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STATEMENT ON THE DEATHS IN ALBERTA CHILDREN’S SERVICES

(amiskwaciwâskahikan) “Our children are our future” said Grand Chief Greg Desjarlais of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations. “When I read that 48 of our young people died between January 1st and October 31st, 2021, I was deeply saddened. The lives lost is staggering to our Nations” added Grand Chief.

“These children were in care. These young people were away from our Nations – living among people that the province “thought” were okay. It is obvious to the Chiefs that the system is broken. The Confederacy is in full support of Chief Irvin Bull’s press release on this matter.

“When the federal government enacted Bill C92 - *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families*, there was some glimmer of light that our Nations would be able to turn the page on the horrible history of our children being removed from our Nations” said Chief Irvin Bull of Louis Bull Tribe.

“We issued our own press release outlining how the Province of Alberta refuses to recognize our law. It is just rhetoric and lip service. There is no support for our law in Alberta. We have had no child die in our custody – can the province make such a claim” added Chief Bull.

“Treaty Six Chiefs are committed to upholding treaty rights for all our members. Our children’s rights do not stop at the reserved lands boundaries. Their treaty rights are portable and cannot be extinguished by a care order” added Grand Chief Greg Desjarlais.

The province continues to fall into their standard line: we are looking at the data and trying to find a workable formula as if children were disposable. This approach must stop.

When our ancestors made treaties with the British Crown, there was no province of Alberta. The Crown committed that we would be able to continue to live as we have always lived. Our children amongst us. But the Canadian government instituted the residential schools – when those closed down – the provinces took over by taking our children. There are more children in care now in Canada than during the residential school period. This is a shameful blight on Canada and the provinces. “People should be up in arms in Alberta that so many children died in care. Thirty lives in 10 months who will never grow up and contribute to their nations. The province should stop looking at the dollars received for our children in care and transfer those funds to our Nations to care for our own children” concluded Grand Chief Desjarlais.

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