

## NEWS RELEASE

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*For Immediate Release  
November 16, 2009*

### HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL RESUMES

Prince George – The underfunding of First Nations child and family service delivery has been a long and challenging struggle whose history was scheduled to unfold in court today. We would encourage the public to demand the timely resumption of this significant and historic case.

This current delay is a result of the Honourable Rob Nicholson, Minister of Justice's, awkwardly timed appointment of Shirish P. Chotalia as Chair of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Two days into the new Chair's term there was notice from the Chair that the hearing dates scheduled to begin on November 16, 2009 were potentially being adjourned. On November 6, 2009, the Chair informed the parties that she was vacating the first week of the evidentiary hearing scheduled to begin in Ottawa on November 16, 2009. It is critical for First Nations children and families receiving on reserve child and family services that this trial go forward now and we encourage the public to write their MLAs and demand that the Tribunal goes forward in a timely manner.

The under funding of on-reserve child and family services dates back to 1990 with the inception of the First Nations Child and Family Service Program. Seventeen years later, on February 27, 2007, the [Assembly of First Nations](#) [AFN], a political organization representing all First Nations in Canada, and the [First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada](#) [FNCFCSC], a national non-profit organization providing services to First Nations child welfare organizations, took the historic step of holding Canada accountable before the Canadian Human Rights Commission for its current treatment of First Nations children. The complaint alleges that the Government of Canada had a longstanding pattern of providing less government funding for child welfare services to First Nations children on reserves than is provided to non-Aboriginal children.

The BC First Nations child and family service agencies Directors have been there throughout the struggle. Since the emergence of the first agencies in BC in the mid 80s, the under funding of services continuously challenged our members to practice in a manner that was respectful to our Nations, our children, and our families. Too often, being funded solely on the number of children we bring into care, resulted in our own people viewing us another extension of the government intent on taking First Nations children away from their families. Service available to every other person in the province to be supported and to preserve families has not been available on reserves in BC or in any other provincial jurisdiction.

Rather than acknowledge this longstanding and well-documented injustice, the Federal government insists in dragging the matter out in court. BC's First Nations child and family service agency Directors will be there to stand up for what is right for First Nations children, families, communities and Nations across this country.

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