

WII BIMAADIZEWAG ABINOOJIIAG INAAKONGEWIN OUR CHILDREN WILL LIVE LAW

NEWSLETTER / ISS002 / WINTER ISSUE

Special Kick-off Meeting with Manitoba's NDP Government

On December 12, 2023, Knowledge Keeper **Carl Stone** and **Bill Bannatyne** led a pipe ceremony at the Private Thomas Chief Memorial Hall before the kickoff meeting with the newly formed Manitoba NDP government.

The Bimaadizewag Abinoojiiag Inaakonigewin (Our Child Will Live Law) is a step toward self-government. Over the last year, Chief and Council and the BON Law Development team have worked hard to ensure it is specifically made for the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation people.



Chief and Council welcomed **Hon. Nahanni Fontaine**, Minister of Families, and staff from the province and the federal Department of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

The meeting included the following community, provincial, and federal dignitaries:

- **Chief and Council**, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
- **BON Law Development Team**, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
- **Hon. Nahanni Fontaine**, Minister of Families, Province of Manitoba
- **Scott Amos**, Regional Program Manager, Indigenous Services Canada
- **Katrina Peddle**, Director, Indigenous Services Canada (via Zoom)
- **Nadia Bourque**, Table Lead, Indigenous Services Canada
- **Jody McLeod**, Regional Program Advisor, Indigenous Services Canada
- **Alex Krosney**, Director of Ministerial Affairs to Minister Fontaine
- **Myriam Jezik**, Assistant to Minister Fontaine
- **Liz Debicka**, Assistant Deputy Minister, Manitoba Department of Families
- **Bobbie Whiteman**, Executive Director, Manitoba Department of Families
- **Emmett Collins**, Senior Policy Advisor, Manitoba Department of Families
- **Wendy Post**, Crown Counsel, Manitoba Department of Justice

Minister **Fontaine** thanked the Elders for contributing to this work and recognized Chief BlueSky's innovation in the law's creation. Fontaine noted that before entering provincial politics, she spent her career in advocacy for the MMIWG and on the front lines as a protestor. She acknowledged BON's efforts of "reclaiming families; bringing children home where they belong.". She added, "As Minister, you have my sacred commitment to getting this done."

SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Since our last newsletter update in September 2023, Brokenhead has completed a draft of the Wii Bimaadizewag Abinoojiag Inaakonigewin (Our Child Will Live Law) to present to the community. The community engagement coordinators had spent time posting on social media, delivering, and mailing out invitations to



the community on and off-reserve to attend the community readings. There were two community readings in August; the first was on the 7th at the Private Tom Chief Memorial Hall, and the second was in Winnipeg at the Canad Inn Polo Park. The session in Brokenhead had 116 members in attendance, more than double the attendance for the previous community engagements. The Winnipeg session had a total of 67 members, which was almost double the last urban engagement. Brokenhead members had the opportunity to express their concerns about the trauma that Child and Family Services (CFS) has caused, which led to the recommendations for community healing circles. Further, there were recommendations for sharing a community engagement schedule publicly. The Brokenhead Ojibway Nation Law Development Team wants to incorporate these recommendations throughout the law development process.



PROGRESS ON THE DRAFT LAW WII BIMAADIZEWAG ABINOOJIIAG INAAKONGEWIN OUR CHILDREN WILL LIVE LAW

The **Brokenhead Ojibway Nation Law Development Working Group** met weekly throughout the summer with the technical team and community to refine and advance the law draft. We thank all the community members who attended and participated in the first law reading that took place August 7-8, 2023.

The community provided excellent feedback that staff incorporated into the current law draft. It is paramount to the Chief and Council and the law development team to ensure that the law's final version reflects the will of the community. The current draft represents a positive step for our children's future. However, our work continues, and we have planned several additional steps with the community.



SOME HIGHLIGHTED POINTS OF OUR LAW AS OF WINTER 2024

- Brokenhead is establishing its own Lodge, meaning that it is no longer under Southeast Child and Family Services
- Our Lodge will be governed by a board of directors, with an executive director running day-to-day operations and an appropriate number of support staff.
- The child's well being will be the main commitment and focus in applying this law with the focus on family.
- Prevention Services will take priority before Protection Services will be considered.
- The child's views must be considered when care agreements are reached with families.
- In cases which a child is unable to remain with their parents, Kinship Care Agreements with immediate family will be prioritized and when that is not possible, an adult who has a significant relationship with the child and their family will be considered.
- We want to ensure that our children are in a loving and caring environment at all times.
- Brokenhead's new child welfare Lodge must authorize all foster homes that are operated.
- Through this law, support can be given to a child who is 'aging out' of CFS and transitioning into adulthood, by providing eligibility of services up to the age of 26.
- When issues must be addressed, we will offer family healing circles. The goal is to minimize the need for protection and to give families tools to succeed together.
- Apprehension will be a final resort as we find pathways to prevent the separation of families.
- The law will allow us to create a Child and Family Advocate office, which will represent children in legal proceedings, by being a voice for them, and deliver adequate justice programs.
- Individuals who would like to appeal any decision made by the Lodge created, can do so through a locally ran tribunal to explain their reasoning and provide an alternative solution.



NEXT STEPS



The first phase of our WII BIMAADIZEWAG ABINOOJIIAG INAAKONIGEWIN (Our Children Will Live Law) project is almost complete. As we move into the second phase, we will begin coordination agreement negotiations with the province of Manitoba and the federal government. The Manitoba cabinet ministers have also approved the start of discussions on behalf of our community.

We look forward to hosting a kick-off ceremony in Brokenhead to start coordination agreement negotiations formally. Staff are determined to ensure that Brokenhead

receives all the applicable funding to assist in this journey. We aim to eliminate the colonial system of child apprehension by helping children and their families using our system of Anishinaabe traditional teachings, values and practices within our entity, which would be owned and operated in Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

UPDATE FROM CHIEF AND COUNCIL

Chief Bluesky gives an update on Brokenhead's Historic Journey caring for the Nation's Children

We have reached a significant milestone for our Nation. It is about asserting what has always been an inherent right - the right to care for our children in a culturally appropriate manner and to our standards. We are creating a law, by us for us, returning the responsibility for child protection to our Nation. We are taking control. This is about ending provincial apprehension of our children and ensuring that we will make the decisions to keep them safe and that their culture and identity will not be taken from them; this has happened so much in the past. Our vision and mindset will be planning for our seven generations ahead.



Traditional Anishinaabe teachings begin with recognizing that our children are precious gifts from the Creator, who has conferred on our communities and families a sacred and collective responsibility of loving, protecting, and nurturing our children. Such recognition is essential for family unity, cultural continuity, child well-being, and self-determination.

In 2019, Canada passed Bill C-92, "An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families." This finally enshrined into federal law what Indigenous peoples across Canada have wanted for decades: to affirm and recognize their jurisdiction over child and family services.

As directed by our Council, a law development working group was formed, and they have been working diligently since the fall of 2022.

We are proud to present WII BIMAADIZEWAG ABINOOJIIAG INAAKONIGEWIN
(OUR CHILDREN WILL LIVE LAW)

We will start official negotiations with Canada and Manitoba, and our sole focus in those meetings will be our children and future generations. This is a special moment, and we value the meaningful input we receive from our community members. This journey is part of reconciliation and another step toward the self-determination our people seek and rightfully deserve.

Miigwech,

Chief BlueSky



COORDINATION AGREEMENT CALENDAR

January

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 ISC- CAD Meeting Time – TBD	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 Manitoba-CAD meeting 1:00 PM- 2:00 PM	12	13
14	15 BON law development meeting 9:00 AM-3:30 PM	16	17	18	19 IGB - meeting -TBD	20
21	22	23	24	25 Manitoba-CAD meeting 1:00 PM- 2:00 PM	26	27
28	29 BON law development meeting – <u>Zoom</u> 5-7PM	30	31			
	BON - law development meetings	Manitoba meetings	IGB meetings	ISC meetings		



COORDINATION AGREEMENT CALENDAR

February

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 ISC- CAD Meeting Time – TBD	2 <u>IGB - meeting</u> update meeting time-TBD	3
4	5	6	7	8 <u>Manitoba-CAD meeting</u> 1:00 PM- 2:00 PM	9	10
11	12 All Day- Chief and Council 9-3 PM	13	14	15 ISC- CAD Meeting Time – TBD	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 <u>Manitoba-CAD meeting</u> 1:00 PM- 2:00 PM	23 Technical team Meeting 9am – 12pm BON board room	24
25	26 BON – Internal Law Development 5:00pm – 7:00 Pm - Zoom	27	28	29 ISC- CAD Meeting Time – TBD		
	law development meetings	Manitoba meetings	IGB meetings	ISC meetings	Technical team Meeting	



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION



A Community Engagement Session (CES) was hosted at the Private Tom Chief Memorial Hall on Tuesday, December 12, 2023. The BON Law Development and Technical teams had a chance to hear many various perspectives on important matters such as; concerns for off-reserve relatives having access to this new law; prevention and protection measures they would like to access for their families moving forward; and the different forms of abuse, such as verbal and emotional abuse. Brett Carlson provided a summary of how the new entity will be structured and how the tribunal will be operated. Carlson noted that ongoing CFS investigations will be handled by the tribunal as well.



Miigwech to all the community members for their attendance, excellent discussions, and for the courage to share their personal stories and experiences with Child and Family Services (CFS).



NEXT NEWSLETTER

**NEW YEAR ISSUE: MEETING
WITH THE FEDERAL &
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**



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