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March 9, 2015

The Honourable Bernard Valcourt
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
North Tower, 10 Wellington Street
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0H4

**Re: Innu leadership jointly call on Canada to include preventative child welfare services
(EPFA funding) in 2015-16 federal budget**

Minister Valcourt, we appreciated the time you took to meet with Innu leadership and other Innu representatives on December 11, 2014. We felt it was a productive and valuable meeting and we eagerly look forward to a reply to Grand Chief Qupee's letter to you dated February 2, 2015.

During this meeting, some time was devoted to discuss a program for which Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada AANDC (AANDC) is responsible, that being Child and Family Services (CFS). Across Canada, the federal government provides funding for child welfare services to First Nations children on reserve. Services in almost all provinces now include funding under the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach (EPFA), introduced in 2008. This federal funding stream supports preventative programming that reduces risk, thus limiting the need for higher levels of child welfare intervention such as the removal of a child.

We started discussions with your department about obtaining EPFA funding in 2009. As per federal requirements, a Tripartite Accountability Framework (made between Canada, the province, and all First Nations in the province, i.e. Miawpukek and the Innu) was submitted to your department in Fall 2013, well over a year ago.

As Innu leaders, we are standing together and calling on the federal government to extend child welfare prevention funding to our children in the Province of Newfoundland & Labrador. We implore Canada to take measures to ensure resources for enhanced prevention funding for Newfoundland & Labrador are included in its 2015-16 budget.

According to this province's statistics for Child, Youth and Family Services, the majority of Innu children being taken into foster care are under four years of age. Just as alarming, Innu children comprise nearly 20% of all children in care in Newfoundland and Labrador. Another unfortunate fact is that every Innu family in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish has been impacted by child welfare services.

On a regular basis, our children are being removed from their homes in situations that could have been prevented with enhanced prevention resources. Each day that goes by, too many of our children are continuing to live outside of their homes, when they could have been returned safely home with prevention services.

With prevention funding, we would be able to increase staff capacity, work through case plans, provide supports and services that can lower the risk to children, lessen their time in care and ensure children who do enter care remain connected to their kin, community, Innu language and culture. Our Innu Round Table Secretariat stands ready to begin the next stages to implement such services and programs once funding is approved.

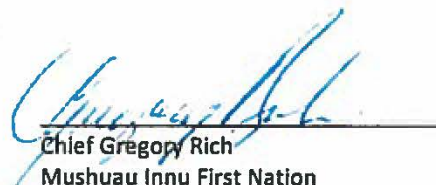
We had hoped and expected to see our EPFA funding come through in last year's federal budget. This did not happen and currently, we are still waiting. While we wait, Innu children and families in Newfoundland & Labrador have no child welfare prevention services. Families are literally breaking up because of this delay.

Minister Valcourt, we call on you and the government of Canada to include EPFA funding for Newfoundland & Labrador in this 2015-16 federal budget. Innu children and families cannot wait another year.

Yours truly,



Chief Andrew Penashue
Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation



Chief Gregory Rich
Mushuau Innu First Nation

Cc Via email only:
Grand Chief Anastasia Qupee Innu Nation
Minister Sandy Collins CYFS
Minister Keith Russell Aboriginal Affairs
Ray Andrews Federal Special Representative – Innu Round Table
Chief Mi'sel Joe Miawpukek First Nation