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**Canadian Human Rights complaint on First Nations child welfare filed today by
Assembly of First Nations and First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of
Canada**

Today, the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada formally filed a complaint today with the Canadian Human Rights Commission regarding lack of funding for First Nations child welfare.

"There are more than 27,000 First Nations children in state care. This is a national disgrace that requires the immediate and serious attention of all governments to resolve," said National Chief Phil Fontaine. "Rational appeals to successive federal governments have been ignored. After years of research that confirm the growing numbers of our children in care, as well as the potential solutions to this crisis, we have no choice but to appeal to the Canadian Human Rights Commission."

"I have said all along that I would rather negotiate than litigate," added the National Chief. "But we have the right to determine what is best for the future of our children. Our children must have an equal opportunity to grow-up with their families, in their communities, and in their culture. No First Nation child should have to forgo this opportunity as a result of poverty or an inability to access basic services."

"First Nations leadership have been forced into the position of launching this formal complaint against the federal government", said Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Chief Lawrence Joseph. "It has become clear to our leadership that governments do not respond to demonstrated, real and growing needs in First Nations child welfare."

"We are not interested in conflict, we are seeking a just, equitable, and proactive resolution on behalf of our First Nations children and families," added Chief Joseph.

"According to the Department of Indian Affairs own website, *'fundamental change in the funding approach of First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies to child welfare is required in order to reverse the growth rate of children coming into care, and in order for the agencies to meet their mandated responsibilities'*," noted Cindy Blackstock, executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. "We could not agree more. We have worked diligently with the AFN, First Nations child and family service agencies, and Indian Affairs to develop a detailed, evidence based solution to the problem."

"The federal government still has not acted on the recommendations," added Ms. Blackstock. "We can no longer stand still as the safety and well being of First Nations children depends on implementing this solution so we are proud to stand with the Assembly of First Nations in filing this human rights complaint."

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.

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