



An open letter to Premier Caroline Cochrane and the Government of the Northwest Territories

Dear Premier Cochrane,

Under your watch, the Government of the Northwest Territories has continued a centuries long policy of removing Indigenous children from their families, homes and communities – denying them their culture, and basic human rights.

Inuvialuit have taken decisive action to protect our children by passing a new Inuvialuit Family Way of Living Law (Inuvialuit Qitunrariit Inuuniarnikkun Maligaksat) to take responsibility for the care of our children and youth – an inherent right recognized by the Government of Canada and the United Nations.

At first you commended us, acknowledging our law as a “big step forward in ensuring decisions are made in the best interests of Inuvialuit children, youth, and families,” and promised to work with Indigenous leaders to move our law forward.

Less than one year later, you changed your view and are taking the position at the Supreme Court of Canada that the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples can only be implemented on terms acceptable to the Government of the Northwest Territories. The choice of your government to use the cover of jurisdictional arguments to deny Inuvialuit children their basic rights, continuing the colonial legacy of removing Inuit children from Inuit communities is extremely disturbing and disappointing.

We are calling on you Premier Cochrane and the Government of the Northwest Territories to drop your intervention at the Supreme Court and to join us in ending centuries of harm by recognizing that Inuvialuit should be the primary decision makers about the care and support of Inuvialuit children, youth, and families.

Meaningful reconciliation requires more than words. It's long past time your government takes action to support Inuit children.

Duane Ningaqsik Smith
Chair and CEO

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, which represents six Inuit communities in the Northwest Territories pursuant to the constitutionally-protected 1984 Inuvialuit Final Agreement