

Ontario calling new childcare agreement with Treaty 3 'historical moment'^[1]

Agreement promises to lead to the transfer of jurisdiction over childcare from Ontario to grand council

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EXCERPTS

The province is calling a "relationship agreement" officially signed on Thursday between Ontario and Grand Council Treaty 3 an "historical moment," and the first of its type in Canada.

The agreement is the first step in a process that will eventually lead to the transfer of jurisdiction over childcare from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to the grand council, according to minister Michael Coteau. That is expected to include services ranging from child welfare and early education to after-school programming and youth mental health support.

The agreement forecasts "a vision to get to the point where there is a self-determining body that will deliver those services that traditionally governments like ours have delivered," Coteau told CBC News.

"There's been some really horrible outcomes in regards to the treatment of Indigenous children in this province historically, that's gone through generation to generation," he continued.

This type of bilateral relationship-building has been going on for several years now, according to Grand Council Treaty 3 Grand Chief Francis Kavanaugh, adding that Thursday's agreement is effectively a renewal of commitment between the two parties.

Further talks

Kavanaugh said that the signing ensures further dialogue between the grand council and Ontario over the issue of childcare and how to strengthen agencies within Treaty 3 to deliver it, while incorporating aspects not prescribed by provincial oversight.

"Organizations in our territory have the capacity and the knowledge to carry out what is required in taking care of our own kids," Kavanaugh said. "We also incorporate our traditional and cultural appropriate systems."

The two parties will continue to meet in order to work out the particulars over how to transfer that authority, Coteau said, adding that, while there is no set timetable - the process "should be driven by the community" - there is "an urgency" to make it happen.

Kavanaugh said the rearing of Indigenous children should be overseen by Indigenous communities.

"To have the provincial governments - not only the provincial, but federal government - recognize that we have jurisdiction with respect to raising our own children," he said.

-reprinted from CBC News

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