



Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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## BACKGROUND

### REMOTENESS QUOTIENT TABLE

- The Remoteness Quotient Table will ensure that the same levels of child welfare services are available in the North as in the rest of Canada, despite the additional costs of remoteness. Guiding principles for this partnership include:
  - i. The primacy of the best interest of the child;
  - ii. The need for an equitable and evidence-based child welfare funding model that is responsive to geographic remoteness, community needs and infrastructure, and cultural traditions;
  - iii. The need for a sound empirical basis for funding calculations; and
  - iv. The importance of collaboration and transparency to ensure open and informed lines of communication.
- The general concept of a “remoteness quotient” was endorsed by the CHRT in its September 14, 2016 decision regarding immediate relief in proceedings launched by the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations. NAN seized this opportunity by establishing a technical table of experts to work with INAC to develop a model to put this concept into practice with a usable funding formula.
- The Remoteness Quotient Table will provide expert advice that will be obtained to develop a remoteness quotient that can be used for funding First Nation child welfare agencies serving remote communities. NAN and Canada will develop mutually agreeable remedies related to a remoteness quotient for joint presentation to the CHRT for implementation in the remedy phase of the Caring Society proceedings.
- In a landmark ruling in proceedings launched by the Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations, the Tribunal ruled that: *“The First Nations Child & Family Services [FNCFS] Program, corresponding funding formulas and other related provincial/territorial agreements intend to provide funding to ensure the safety and well-being of First Nations children on reserve by supporting culturally appropriate child and family services that are meant to be in accordance with provincial/territorial legislation and standards and be provided in a reasonably comparable manner to those provided off-reserve in similar circumstances.”*

## Timeline:

- **January 2016:** The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal confirmed the experience of First Nation communities – inadequate remoteness funding for Indigenous child welfare services delivered on reserves. This supported the final ruling that Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has discriminated against 163,000 First Nations children by underfunding child and family services on reserves. NAN was not a party at the time.
- **May 2016:** The Tribunal granted NAN “Interested Party” status in the relief phase of the proceedings because of the monumental effect that the case may have on NAN First Nations. The purpose of the relief proceedings is to develop short, medium and long-term ways to address discrimination in funding, including for remoteness.
- **May 2016:** As a new party to the case, NAN introduced the Tribunal to the concept of a Remoteness Quotient (RQ) because of the experience of NAN communities in the North.
- **September 2016:** The Tribunal released a decision on what INAC needs to do to provide “immediate relief” from its discriminatory practices. The Tribunal stated at paragraph 80: *“The [Tribunal] agrees with the NAN that a remoteness quotient needs to be developed as part of medium to long term relief and that data needs to be appropriately collected.”*
- **January 2017:** NAN filed motion materials with respect to immediate relief in the Tribunal proceedings. NAN requested two types of funding orders for data collection and analysis:
  - i. Funding for two immediate updates to the 2006 *Barnes Report*. The *Barnes Report* was commissioned by Tikiñagan and Payukotayno (two of NAN’s child welfare agencies) and proposed an evidence-based remoteness funding model. The report is now 10 years old and was based on limited data. It can be immediately updated to include data from the 2006 census and 2011 household survey. In fall 2017, it can be updated with 2016 census data.
  - ii. Funding broader data collection and analysis, to inform the development of a strong, evidence-based RQ as long-term relief.
- **December 2016 - January 2017:** NAN engaged experts Dr. Thomas Wilson, an emeritus professor of business and economics at the University of Toronto, and Mr. David Barnes, author of the Barnes Report. Dr. Wilson and Mr. Barnes filed a joint affidavit to the Tribunal outlining steps that would need to be taken by INAC to properly fund and create an up-to-date remoteness quotient during Immediate Relief Hearings on March 22-24, 2017.
- **February 2017:** NAN and INAC agree to establish this RQ Table to develop a joint submission to the Tribunal regarding Immediate Relief Hearings. The goal is to gather data collaboratively so that transparent and evidence-based decisions can be made for the long-term.
- **February 28, 2017:** During a special meeting, NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly unanimously approved the recommended draft Terms of Reference, demonstrating enthusiasm for this process and optimism for historic change for First Nation child welfare funding in the North.