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PRESS RELEASE

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Tribunal orders compensation for First Nations children impacted by on-reserve child welfare system

A landmark ruling will mean Ottawa must pay tens of thousands of dollars to every First Nations child who was placed in the on-reserve child welfare system. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling found Canada 'wilfully and recklessly' discriminated against First Nations children and families. Now the federal government will have to pay 40-thousand dollars to each child, the maximum allowed under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Canada estimates more than 44,000 children were in care between 2006 and 2017. The Assembly of First Nations say as many as 54,000 children could be eligible for compensation. The tribunal is also ordering compensation for parents or grandparents whose children were taken; roughly \$20,000, plus an additional \$20,000 for every child taken.

Executive Director of Child and Family Services at Carrier Sekani Family Services Mary Teegee says "the ruling is good news, as it will benefit victims." The tribunal found the federal government discriminated against Indigenous children living on reserves by not properly funding child and family services. Many children were taken, with many estimating there are more First Nations children currently living in foster care than the amount who attended residential schools.

Teegee says "This never should have gone back to court." The decision comes more than three years after a ruling came down that there was clear discrimination by the federal government. In that decision, Ottawa was found not to have provided anywhere near the funding non-Indigenous children received for child welfare services. Teegee wonders why, "At the end of the day, Justin Trudeau says relations with First Nations is good, but Ottawa will still take us to court regarding victims of discrimination?"

Meanwhile, Teegee says she is waiting on several other decisions from the tribunal surrounding Jordan's Principle and other court case challenges, including a class action law suit that is separate from this case. Details can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2IzftVe>. Teegee says "These are wrongs that have to be made right and we are hopeful that other challenges before the courts will have a positive ruling."

The federal government has 30 days to appeal the decision. Even if they appeal, they must implement the decision unless they apply for, and are granted, a stay by the federal court.

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