

Meeting Summary

Eagle Lake First Nation – Review of Draft Child and Family Well-Being Law (Bill C-92)

Date: January 20, 2025

Location: Eagle Lake Community Hall

Host: Doug Keshen (Legal Counsel)

Attendance

In-person and online participants included:

Virginia Meawasigie; Renee Bruyere; Roger McGraw; Francis Kavanaugh; Brenda Morison; Laura Cripps; Tim Kavanaugh (Council Member); Bob Gardner; Krysta Derosier (online); Cheyanne Derosier (online); Maggie Kavanaugh (online); Precious Adams (online); Lloyd Napish (Council Member); Kelsey Pfister (Neighbourly Advisory); Marlene Landon (Director of Social Services); Donna Cool; Josephine Kavanaugh; Andy Sky; Richard Kelly; Margaret Wabonge; Doug Keshen (Lawyer / Meeting Host); Nicole Nguyen; Jessica Lee, David Kelly, Bernadette Wabange (Chief).

Purpose of Meeting

- To collectively review the draft Eagle Lake Child and Family Well-Being Law developed under Bill C-92.
 - To walk through the draft as a working document, identify areas requiring revision, and discuss language, intent, and implementation considerations.
 - To respect Elders' guidance and community process before further legal or coordination agreement steps.
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Process and Protocols

- The draft law is confidential and not to be circulated, copied, or shared on social media.
- Highlighted sections (in orange) identify terms requiring translation into Anishnaabemowin.
- The draft remains unfinished and must be:

1. Amended (including Anishnaabemowin language),
 2. Reviewed by Council,
 3. Taken through community engagement and ratification,
 4. Reviewed by Canada, triggering a one-year federal review period.
- Requests to email the draft to off-site members were declined; instead:
 - The draft was reviewed on-screen, and
 - Additional in-person sessions (including Thunder Bay) were suggested.
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Overview of Bill C-92 and Draft Law

- Doug Keshen provided background on Bill C-92, emphasizing:
 - Prevention services as a central funding and policy priority.
 - Eagle Lake's authority to determine its own pace, structure, and transition.
 - The draft law asserts Eagle Lake jurisdiction over child and family services, grounded in the best interests of the child, culture, family, and community.
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Transition and Service Delivery

- For an initial 3–5 year period, protection (apprehension) services are expected to continue through AAFS, under a transition protocol developed by Eagle Lake.
- Key clarifications:
 - Once the law is in force, Eagle Lake assumes all protection and prevention authority, with a defined transition period.
 - Any AAFS involvement would occur under Eagle Lake's law, not provincial legislation.
 - Transition protocols will address rare cases requiring child removal while Eagle Lake builds capacity.
- Liability insurance challenges were noted as a practical consideration during transition.

- Eagle Lake will renegotiate funding with ISC every three years, with the expectation of increasing internal capacity over time.
 - Leadership retains the option to remove the transition period entirely if desired.
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Learning from Other Nations

- Community expressed interest in learning from other Nations' experiences.
 - Examples shared:
 - Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (Big Trout Lake) partners with Tikinagan Child and Family Services for additional capacity.
 - Other Nations fully assume services and purchase support from agencies as needed.
 - Emphasis placed on community-based training, hiring from within, and long-term generational capacity-building.
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Community Reflections and Values

- Strong emphasis that this work is for the children and must remain community driven.
 - Members acknowledged:
 - The impacts of provincial systems and residential schools,
 - The need for healing alongside law-making,
 - The importance of truth, accuracy, and care in drafting the law.
 - Community members highlighted the loss of cultural connection in current systems and the importance of restoring language, ceremony, and belonging.
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Acknowledgements

- The community acknowledged the foundational work of former leaders and Knowledge Keepers, including former Chief Arnold Gardner, and expressed interest in dedicating the law to his leadership.

- Past contributors recognized included:
Roy Napish; Robert Kelly; Alfred Kelly; Betsie Adams; Margaret Napish; Joey Wabonge; Charlie Perreault; Allan Gardner; Jack Pitchenese; Phillip Gardner; May Wabonge.
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Draft Law – Key Discussion Points

- Language:
 - Strong direction to replace English legal terms with Anishnaabemowin where possible.
 - Discussion on appropriate Anishinaabe terms for:
 - *Child well-being,*
 - *Adoption,*
 - Broader recognition of family and community beyond “birth parents.”
- Jurisdiction:
 - The law asserts Eagle Lake’s authority in cases of conflict with provincial or federal laws.
 - Jurisdiction applies on- and off-reserve, with policies to be developed over time.
- UNDRIP:
 - Discussion of Canada’s obligations and ongoing inconsistencies with the removal of Indigenous children.
- Elder Circle of Care:
 - Questions raised about availability, practicality, and scope of involvement.
 - Further clarification needed on structure and expectations.
- Children in Care:
 - Community requested clarity on how many Eagle Lake children are in care and where they reside.
 - Noted challenges include a shortage of local foster homes and children placed in Dryden/Kenora.

- Rights and Culture:
 - Proposal to make language immersion a legal right for every Eagle Lake child.
 - Recognition that children living off-reserve remain entitled to Eagle Lake services and support.
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Committees and Next Steps

- Language Committee proposed, with suggested members:
 - Virginia Meawasigie
 - Gary Kavanaugh
 - Brenda Morison
 - Donna Cool
 - Bob Gardner
 - Margaret Gardner
 - Next Session:
 - Tuesday, January 27, 2026
 - Focus on:
 - Anishnaabemowin language integration,
 - Refinement of key terms,
 - Drafting responsibilities,
 - Further review of community-identified sections.
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Closing Reflections

- Community members emphasized unity, healing, and careful review.
- The meeting closed with gratitude for shared learning and a reminder that this law is about protecting children, restoring culture, and strengthening Eagle Lake for future generations.