

MANITOU RAPIDS / RRFNS FAMILY LAW



Quarterly Newsletter #1, July 2022

Rainy River First Nations will be starting its journey of freedom from a colonial system of legislative and policy controls over child and family services. The hope we have as Rainy River First Nations, is to define the coexistence envisioned by our forefathers who negotiated Treaty 3 on October 3rd, 1873.

We realize our challenge is to modernize our traditional teachings, customs, and traditions into a jurisdictional framework that ensures unfettered administration of a RRFNs law over child and family services that is designed, developed, and endorsed by our people comprising Rainy River First Nations.

Chief Rob McGinnis

WHAT IS THE MANITOU RAPIDS / RRFNS FAMILY LAW?

In 2019 the Government of Canada passed a new law, Bill C-92, respecting and affirming First Nations inherent right of self-government and jurisdiction in relation to child and family services.

In 2021, Manitou Rapids / RRFNs gave notice to the Federal Government of their intention to begin to take the necessary steps to assert their sovereignty by creating their own family law. The Family Law will be funded by Indigenous Services Canada.

Over the next two years, Manitou Rapids / RRFNs will assert complete independence and self-governance in child welfare from provincial and federal authorities.

WHY A NEWSLETTER?

Community members have requested a formal communication process so that everyone is aware of the project and are kept updated as the project unfolds.

We anticipate publishing a quarterly newsletter. In the future we may use a variety of communication methods, such as social media, when appropriate.

WHO IS WORKING ON THE PROJECT?

The project has been given a mandate by Chief and Council who have engaged the services of Barnes Management Group to facilitate the engagement of the community and help draft the new law in collaboration with the community membership. A family law working group, chaired by Chief McGinnis, has been established to guide this work.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I. Why are we creating a new Family Law?

Currently: Manitou Rapids / RRFNs receives child and family services under provincial legislation through Weechi-It-Te-Win Family Services. Services to our members has been delivered under a western and colonial model. This is our opportunity to develop our own family law to make services better for our children and families, through exercising our sovereign rights and self-governance in all matters relating to children and families. The Family Law will cover all Manitou Rapids / RRFNs members on and off reserve.

II. Who is creating the new Law? How is it being developed?

We anticipate this process will take approximately two years. There are several steps to the process of creating the new Family Law:

- a) Elders, Care Providers, Youth, families, and Community Services Providers will be asked what they think the new law should look like.
- b) The new Family law will be grounded by the community consultations. A draft law will be sent to the community for consultation.
- c) Any new input from these consultations will be considered and necessary changes will be made. A final draft will go back to the community and the new law will be put to the community by way of a referendum.

We are happy to announce that Art Hunter has been retained as the Cultural Engagement Coordinator. The Cultural Engagement Coordinator has a primary responsibility to facilitate all cultural protocols in the planning of all engagements associated with the workplan for the development and implementation of the Family Law.

Dismantling the institutions of colonial control over Rainy River First Nations will be one of our biggest challenges as we, in part, have condoned the creation of federal and provincial, brown-faced mandated service regimes over our rights and freedoms

Chief Rob McGinnis

III. Who will be covered by the new Law?

The Family Law will cover all Manitou Rapids / RRFNs members on and off reserve.

IV. What is the new Law going to be called?

The name for the new Family Law has not yet been chosen. Community members on and off reserve will be invited in the near future to submit a logo design and suggestions for a name. The selected Family Law name will be translated into Ojibway.

V. Will Weechi-it-te-win still be involved in Manitou Rapids / RRFNs?

Once the new Law is ratified by the community Weechi-it-te-win will no longer be involved with Manitou Rapids / RRFNs families.

VI. Have any other First Nations developed their own Family Law?

In 2021, Cowessess First Nation was the first community in Canada to declare sovereignty over child welfare matters. This summer members of the Chief and Council, staff and the Family Law Working Group will conduct an on-site visit to Cowessess

This trip will further inform us on the key processes of governance, policy, law making, and the creation of prevention programs to meet the needs of children, youth and families as we embark on our own sovereign journey.

VII. How do I get more information on the new Law, and how can my voice be heard?

If you have any questions regarding the new law, or wish to request a confidential interview about this process, send an email to c92@barnesmanagementgroup.com and you will receive a timely response to your questions.

You will also be receiving a confidential survey in the coming weeks.

