



To: The Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth

Re: **Endorsement of the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth**

July 3, 2019

We Matter would like to formally endorse the *Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth*. As a national charitable non-profit organization dedicated to Indigenous youth support, hope and life promotion, our mission is to communicate to Indigenous youth that they matter, and create spaces of support for those going through a hard time while fostering unity and resiliency.

We Matter exists as an organization to provide messages of love, belonging, hope, culture, and strength to Metis, Inuit and First Nations youth across the country. We operate from the understanding of the long and generational impacts of colonization and colonial trauma, and the effects of that violence and trauma on Indigenous youth today. Indigenous youth in Canada experience the highest rates of suicide, addiction, violence, youth in care, and abuse, while also having limited access to supports and resources which recognize intergenerational trauma and are culturally relevant. We believe that it is through systemic means, such as through the process of residential schools, that Indigenous families and communities have become disconnected from their culture, language, and healthy familial connection and traditional parenting practices.

In order for Indigenous children and youth to feel loved, supported, and cared for, there needs to be an active system of support and resources for not just youth, but their entire families to heal and reclaim healthy and traditional forms of intimacy, affection, discipline, communication, and connection. We do not support the physical harm of children and youth, and do not believe physical punishment has a role to play in family and community healing. The *Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth* clearly outlines the impacts of physical punishment on youth, and is a good step in providing the knowledge and education to not only stop physical punishment, but also provide alternate means of positive discipline which comes from a place of love, care, and understanding – core values of many Indigenous cultures.

We thank the Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth for bringing to light this issue, and strongly encourage the continuing research of these impacts as well as the promotion of alternative approaches to discipline, which take into consideration and are mindful of Indigenous contexts and cultures.

To learn more about We Matter and the work we do to support Indigenous youth, please visit wemattercampaign.org.

Chii Miigwetch / Gila'kasla / Marsi Cho / Thank you.

Sincerely,

We Matter