



Screen shot of the website for the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society.— in

Rift widens over First Nations child welfare agency in Chilliwack

— image credit: FVACFSS.ca

[Chilliwack Times](#)

Divisions in the Sto:lo community over governance of the local aboriginal child and family services agency show no signs of healing.

Last week Sto:lo Tribal Council (STC) Grand Chief Doug Kelly said the designated agency, Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society (FVACFSS), was “out of control,” and he was given a mandate by STC chiefs to make the agency accountable.

He and Chief Willie Charlie of Chehalis, who was removed from the FVACFSS board by the other directors, were critical of board chair

(and former chatelaine of B.C.) Gwen Point who they say has acted in a “vindictive” manner over losing an election to the board last year.

The fight among local Sto:lo leaders over what was called Xyolhemeylh Child and Family Services dates back to 2004. The debate then served, in part, to split the Sto:lo Nation and spur the re-creation of the STC.

Point responded in a statement from the FVACFSS board this week, which said Kelly has “pursued an objective to attempt to destabilize FVACFSS.”

“We are open to constructive criticism and feedback, however, Mr. Kelly is now attacking the organization and the personal and professional reputations of the people that work here and serve on our board. He has made public statements regarding the operations of the agency and the integrity and professionalism of our board. These are unfounded and untrue.”

Kelly has complained to the provincial and federal agencies responsible for children and family affairs, and has had several meetings with senior officials.

He also attended an “extraordinary meeting” held by the FVACFSS board last Wednesday where he said “I witnessed fear overtaking common sense.”

Kelly said he has been told the only role for chiefs and band councillors is to advocate for funding for the agency, not to “interfere” in its governance.

“It is not political interference when a chief or a councillor becomes involved in planning for the care of children from their community,” he wrote in a Sept. 28 email to representatives of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and the B.C. Minister of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

Point says Kelly wants to seek to have the FVACFSS fall under a governance structure associated with “his” First Nations Health Council (FNHC).

Kelly said that’s not true, although he defended the 20 years of hard work behind the FNHC and its positive structure.

He reiterated to government that he “will battle for transformative change” on this file, and he hopes those supporting the status quo will join him.

Point stated nothing was wrong.

“The agency is financially and professionally strong and stable and operating with the full support of our federal and provincial partners,” she said. “We continue to move forward in our unwavering commitment to serve the children and families of our communities.”

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