

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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No Space for Another Missed Opportunity: FNLC Response to Skye's Story



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(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council is urging all levels of government to recognize the truth shared through “Skye’s Legacy: A focus on belonging”, the most recent report of the Representative for Children and Youth (“RCY”), and to take immediate steps to support First Nations in bringing our children home – where they belong.

“Skye’s story brings to the forefront once again the critical importance of First Nations children being supported to remain in their homes, families and communities. This is Canada and BC’s colonial legacy, which continues to this day, and has sought to displace Indigenous peoples from our lands and territories through the forced removal of our children, assimilation and genocide,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, UBCIC Secretary-Treasurer. “As we hold ceremonies and gatherings for the children who did not return home from residential schools, and for the survivors, we also hold prayers for the spirits of Skye and her mother Marnie, and all those children who have been lost to the colonial child welfare system. We call on BC to place a moratorium on bringing Indigenous children into care and to immediately conduct reassessments of all Indigenous children currently in care so that they can return to their families and communities as soon as possible.”

“We thank the RCY for her work in sharing Skye’s story through the voices and memories of her community, her family members and those who knew both Skye and her mother Marnie. However, the glaring reality as affirmed through Skye’s story is that we absolutely cannot miss another opportunity to make the immediate, systemic reforms that are needed to bring our children home and this cannot be accomplished without full partnership with First Nations”, stated Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive Member. “The multiple and repeated failures highlighted in this report emphasize the urgent need to see First Nations jurisdiction over our children and families fully realized and respected, and funding must be immediately allocated to our communities and Nations for this to happen. The Province cannot unilaterally determine how they are going to amend this broken system. We are tired of responding to the deaths of our children. We call for an immediate reallocation of resources to address the ongoing inequities that exist for our families and communities, and to support the collective healing that is needed. The bare minimum is no longer acceptable. Reconciliation is an action word, and we will accept nothing less.”

“We honour and hold up Skye’s legacy, and that of her mother and grandmother. But this story is not new to us. Two weeks ago, the evidence of Canada’s racist and genocidal actions against our peoples through the theft of our children was brought to light for all the world to see. The rest of society can no longer turn a blind eye to the intentional attempts to eradicate Indigenous peoples by the colonial state which have been carried on from the Residential School System, through the Sixties Scoop and the modern-day child welfare system”, stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “We do not need to waste time and money on another government focused needs-assessment that will place a Band-Aid on a dysfunctional system and continue to skirt around the actual needs. We have decades of reports and commissions that outline the gaps and dictate very clear Calls to Action for Federal and Provincial

governments to address these issues. What we need now is meaningful and real action, by all levels of government, to fully implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Federal Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families, and Indigenous laws.”

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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