

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

September 29, 2021

HUGE WIN FOR FIRST NATIONS KIDS! FEDERAL COURT DISMISSES CANADA'S APPEALS

(X̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵəm (Musqueam), Ṣḳẉx̣ẉụ́7̣mesh (Squamish) and ṣə̣ḷiḷẉə̣ṭə̣ł (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.)

The First Nations Leadership Council welcomes the decision of the Federal Court today that resoundingly dismissed Canada's appeals of two of the orders from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) in the case *Canada (Attorney General) v. First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada*. Canada sought to challenge the findings of discrimination against First Nations children and families under federal policies that caused children to be removed and underfunded services to First Nations communities. The case stems back to 2006 when the human rights violations against First Nations children, families and communities was taken to the Human Rights Commission.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, stated, "As we celebrate this decision, we also want to acknowledge all the connection between those who are in the child welfare system today and the residential school system that saw our families broken up and abused and mistreated. These are connected because these systems have tried to strip our people of our fundamental human rights, discriminate against us, and this has caused such horrific suffering. We must not allow Canada to avoid accountability or evade the truth of this through legal maneuvers where they appeal and delay addressing these wrongs. The UBCIC calls upon the Prime Minister to stop fighting us and our children, get off your colonial high horse and fix what was done to our people. It is time for the Prime Minister to apologize for his government's repeated attempts to fight First Nations kids in court and to put substance behind his sycophantic discourse on reconciliation."

"This decision from the Federal Court sends a strong message to Canadians and the Prime Minister Trudeau once and for all cease fighting First Nations kids in court, and to ensure that the discrimination we have faced for generations ends immediately," stated Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "Instead of wasting millions of dollars to defend a broken system, and maintaining an approach that sees our people entangled in child welfare due to underfunding, racism and colonialism, I hope they act now to end this discrimination, and collaborate with us on sustainable needs based funding so that no child is left behind. The harm they do every day that this is not resolved, must be exposed on this first National Truth and Reconciliation Day."

"We want to acknowledge Dr. Cindy Blackstock, the Caring Society, and the Assembly of First Nations who together advanced the human rights complaint in 2006, and since have spent 15 years fighting for justice and truth" said Regional Chief Terry Teegee from the BC Assembly of First Nations. "In BC, standing up Indigenous laws and legal orders, including through First Nations jurisdiction over children and families, and the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are priority areas of focus, as our children must be with their families and Nations, raised in our culture, languages and with the chance to grow up and be loved as First Nations children We call on Canada



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to withdraw all of their appeals and technical fights to undermine settlement, and immediately resolve this complaint, build the needed changes, and work with us.”

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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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