

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

NEWS RELEASE

May 19, 2016

Province Ignores First Nations on Children and Families

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) condemns the Province's unilateral announcement today of an Advisory Council to move ahead with implementation of the fundamentally flawed Plecas Report.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of UBCIC stated, "The Plecas Report – which addresses matters that directly impact Indigenous children, families, and communities – was produced without any engagement with Indigenous Peoples or consideration of the basic fact that our children are vastly overrepresented in the child welfare system. We have made it abundantly clear that it is completely unacceptable – in the age of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – for the Province to be unilaterally undertaking this work while completely ignoring us. Sometimes it seems like it is still 1916 and not 2016 in this Province."

The Province's announcement of an Advisory Council came as a complete surprise. The FNLC is not aware of any Indigenous Nation being engaged about the Plecas Report since it was released, or of any consultation or engagement about an Advisory Council.

Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit, stated, "For the last number of months we have been working intensely alongside other Aboriginal organizations with the Province to plan a province-wide forum on First Nations Children and Families to be held on May 30 -31. At no time did the Province mention that it was taking this step. To make this announcement, in this way, less than two weeks before that event, is a breach of basic good relations. Further, we recently wrote specifically about our concerns with the Plecas Report to the Province, and a reply back from Minister Cadieux on May 5 made no mention of this Council."

BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Shane Gottfriedson concluded, "We call on the Advisory Council and the Province to consider whether it is appropriate and prudent that this Council is the suitable body given the lack of engagement with Indigenous Nations and First Nations organizations. The Federal government has made significant changes and has shown in very real ways inclusion and involvement of First Nations in a renewed relationship; we implore the Provincial government to do the same. We ask you to consider whether the Province's approach is consistent with the lessons learned and Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As Indigenous Peoples we know how best to protect our families and our communities. We must all move forward together, and Indigenous people absolutely have to be respected and included as decision makers."

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

For further comment please contact:

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