

First Nations Summit

MEDIA RELEASE

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System failed Alex Gervais; RCY report recommendations must be implemented

Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver, British Columbia – Leaders of the First Nations Summit (FNS) are speaking in support of today's report, *Broken Promises: Alex's Story*, from Bernard Richard, A/Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) on the life and death of Alex Gervais, an 18 year old Metis youth who committed suicide in September 2015.

"The RCY report clearly illustrates how the current child welfare system in BC failed Alex and played a contributing role in the circumstances that led to his tragic death. Youth in care need to be provided every chance to grow up in a healthy, loving, responsible and a culturally and familial connected environment to ensure they have opportunities for success. The A/RCY has outlined four recommendations which will lead to substantive and systemic change that is crucial to fixing the system that failed Alex, as well as so many other aboriginal children and youth in care. We encourage BC to take immediate steps to implement these recommendations", said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

"The clear path forward is child, parent, family, and Indigenous community based. The underlying principles must be to make every effort to ensure familial connectedness and permanency are achieved. In doing so, there must also be adequate measures in place to provide family caregivers the same level of resources and supports offered to non-family caregivers", added Robert Phillips, also of the FNS Political Executive.

"Government must stop directing and prescribing solutions they deem to be in Indigenous communities' or children's best interests and realize that real solutions include supporting family and community-driven initiatives from within. Only then can the disproportionate number children in care begin to be properly addressed in our collective efforts to prevent similar tragic deaths from occurring in the future", concluded Mr. Phillips.

The First Nations Summit thanks Mr. Richard and the RCY staff for this important report and for their dedication to thoroughly investigating the details surrounding the tragic death of Alex Gervais and hopefully helping to bring some level of finality and closure for his family and friends.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

For further information: Colin Braker, Communications Director, FNS,
Phone: 604-926-9903

