

FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Province must work to implement recommendations contained in the Final Report of the Special Advisor on Aboriginal Child Welfare

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – First Nations Summit (FNS) leaders were in Vancouver today for the release of the Final Report of Grand Chief Edward John, Special Advisor on Aboriginal Child Welfare.

The report entitled "*Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification – from Root Causes to Root Solutions: A Report on Indigenous Child Welfare in British Columbia*", which was delivered to Premier Clark, Minister Cadieux and First Nations leaders, stresses the need for targeted resources to help build capacity for Indigenous peoples and communities, enabling them to better exercise their inherent rights concerning child and family services. It also points to the need to provide stronger, more sustained support to Indigenous families and parents so that Indigenous children have a better opportunity to remain at home, connected to their family and community.

Quotes:

Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive

"Indigenous leaders have long recognized the disproportionate and sobering statistics of Indigenous children in care in this province and have historically pointed to family and community as central to the necessary solutions to create a better future for our children. Grand Chief John's final report identifies the importance of the "*pathways and patterns of connectedness*" that can lead to a better future for Indigenous children, parents, and communities with strong and sustained leadership and action by Canada, BC, and Indigenous parents and communities."

"We wholeheartedly support Grand Chief John's observance that the way forward is child, parent, family, and Indigenous community based and that the underlying principle must be to recognize the reality that no matter where a child in care resides, he/she is still a member of their Indigenous community. The federal and provincial governments must stop directing and prescribing solutions they deem to be in Indigenous communities' or children's best interests and realize that solutions include supporting community-driven initiatives within, and in partnership with, Indigenous communities and families. Only then can the disproportionate number children in care begin to be properly addressed."

Robert Phillips, First Nations Summit Political Executive

"We thank Grand Chief John for his comprehensive report. He has clearly outlined many of the socio-economic and policy impediments in existence today which have resulted in a disproportionate number of Indigenous children in care in BC. There is nothing more important to Indigenous communities than the health and well-being of our children, they are our future.



Grand Chief John's thoughtful recommendations have identified the governments' investments needed as well as path forward for First Nations and governments to work together to prioritize the health and well-being of Indigenous children in BC. We encourage the Government of BC to support and implement all 85 recommendations contained in this report, on a priority basis."

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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, 604-926-9903 or 604-328-4094

Background

Grand Chief Edward John was contracted in September 2015 as Special Advisor to Children and Family Development Minister Stephanie Cadieux on Indigenous children in care, Permanency and Early years.

Over the term of the appointment, the Special Advisor met with First Nations communities, representatives of DAAs, elected politicians from the government and opposition parties in BC, judges, lawyers representing MCFD and Indigenous children and families, MCFD officials from the 13 MCFD regions and Victoria. He additionally met with members of the First Nations Leadership Council, with representatives of many of the First Nations provincial councils and agencies, and with Métis leadership and organizations. In short, the Special Advisor sought out meetings with those who have a direct role in matters relating to Indigenous children in care in BC.

The report contains 85 recommendations, divided into 10 Areas for Focused Action:

- Direct Support for Indigenous Children, Parents and Families in all Indigenous Communities
- Access to Justice and Child and Family Services
- A New Fiscal Relationship – Investing in Patterns of Connectedness
- Prevention Services – Keeping Families Connected
- Re-unification and Permanency Planning
- Nurturing a Sense of Belonging and Prioritizing Culture and Language – Care Plans as a tool for building connectedness
- Early Years – Early Investment in Establishing Patterns of Connectedness
- Indigenous Peoples and Jurisdiction Over Child Welfare
- The Existing Policy Framework – Shifting Towards Patterns of Connectedness
- A National Strategy for Indigenous Child Welfare

The main focal point of the report is *Area 1. Direct Support for Indigenous Children, Parents and Families in all Indigenous Communities*, with the subsequent 9 Areas for Focused Action serving as support for Area 1.

To download Grand Chief John's full report and a summary of recommendations please visit www.fns.bc.ca.