



News Release

For Immediate Release

Canada, British Columbia and the First Nations Leadership Council sign Reconciliation Charter committing to the care of First Nations children and youth

April 10, 2017 – Vancouver, BC

The health and well-being of Indigenous children is a top priority for the Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia and the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs (collectively working together as the First Nations Leadership Council). Together we are taking action to help ensure that children receive the health and social services they need, when they need it.

The Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) have signed a Reconciliation Charter (the Charter) to formalize their commitment to work together to reduce the number of First Nations children in care, to keep families together and support First Nations youth to successfully transition out of care.

The Charter further establishes a joint working group including representatives from all three groups to focus on concrete actions such as legislative reform, policy and program development, and creating an effective fiscal model to support First Nations child welfare in British Columbia. By signing the Charter, the parties have also committed to sustained and measurable progress and to support First Nations to govern their own children and families using approaches grounded in their own cultures and traditions.

Quotes:

"We are pleased to be building on the partnership announced in March to work together towards creating child and family services that are more appropriate to the needs of First Nations communities in British Columbia. This Charter is our commitment to taking concrete action that will result in positive outcomes and bring about real change in Indigenous child welfare in British Columbia."

*The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, M.D., P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs*

"We need to act now, as equal partners with First Nations and the federal government, to change the way we approach child welfare. This Charter is the next step towards realizing our shared goals of improving outcomes for Indigenous children, youth and families in British Columbia and reducing the number of Indigenous children coming into care."

*The Honourable Stephanie Cadieux
Minister of Children and Family Development, Province of British Columbia*

"This Charter is about shared responsibility and cooperation among all of us to improve Aboriginal child and family well-being. I want to commend the many chiefs and child welfare workers across the province who are steadfast advocates for the children and families they represent. Ultimately, the Reconciliation Charter is a commitment to all First Nations communities in British Columbia."

*The Honourable John Rustad,
Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Province of British Columbia*

"This Charter is an important commitment by all parties to work together to fix a broken system and effect real transformative change resulting in improving the lives of First Nations children in BC. Our expectation is that the Charter will lead to an aggressive, culturally appropriate workplan that will directly support First Nations jurisdiction and self-government and address the over representation of First Nations children in care in BC."

*Cheryl Casimer, Political Executive Member
First Nations Summit*

"The BC Assembly of First Nations is committed to advocating and advancing First Nations rights and interests related to child welfare, and the Reconciliation Charter is reflective of those principles. This significant step forward demonstrates the parties' commitment towards the continued need for active and purposeful reconciliation between the Crown and First Nations in relation to children and families. We will continue to engage our partners to ensure a better future for our communities and children and youth."

*Chief Maureen Chapman, A/Regional Chief
BC Assembly of First Nations*

The acid test of the Charter is in whether First Nations children, youth and families can finally be treated with the rights and dignity of all children and our children and families are supported to stay together. First Nations communities must drive the change, with their own jurisdiction and as the Representative for Children and Youth in BC recently noted, this will require Canada and British Columbia to provide equitable and flexible resources directly to First Nations families and communities.

*Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer
Union of BC Indian Chiefs*

Quick Facts

- This Charter is an extension of the partnership between Canada, the FNLC and British Columbia, who signed an agreement in March 2017 to improve supports and increase investments for First Nations children, youth and families in BC
- The FNLC is comprised of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and provides a forum for First Nations in BC to address issues of common concern.

Associated Links

- [Canada and First Nations Leadership Council working together on advancing First Nation child and family services in British Columbia](#)
- [First Nations Child and Family Services](#)
- [British Columbia Assembly of First Nations](#)
- [First Nations Summit](#)
- [Union of BC Indian Chiefs](#)
- [Canada's actions to support First Nations Child and Family Services since the January 2016 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision](#)

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