



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

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First Nations Summit urges provincial government to immediately adopt and implement recommendations contained in the Representative for Children and Youth child death investigation report

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – The First Nations Summit commends Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, the independent Children and Youth Officer for British Columbia, for her recommendations stemming from her investigation into the deaths of four children in northern BC.

“We very much appreciate the thought and care which went into the preparation of this report and its 11 recommendations and agree fully with Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond’s assessment that “the silencing of these children’s voices must stir us to move from loss to learning”, said Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Summit political executive.

The following issues identified in the report must be carefully and fully considered and plans developed to address them:

- *assessments of the children’s safety falling below accepted standards*
- *significant guardianship practice deficiencies*
- *lack of thorough medical assessments for vulnerable children*
- *weaknesses in clinical supervision and case consultation*
- *lack of cultural planning for Aboriginal children in care, and cultural context in assessing safety*
- *insufficient communication between the Ministry and professionals in the community*
- *human resource challenges impacting the ability to provide safe and effective child welfare services*
- *uneven quality assurance practices not sufficiently focused on outcomes/results for children.*

“The Representative for Children and Youth has clearly identified systemic problems within the child and youth system which must be addressed as a measure of prevention from having similar deaths occur in the future. Ms. Turpel-Lafond’s report clearly magnified the need for the BC government to move faster in implementing the recommendations of the 2005 BC Children and Youth Review report by the Honourable Ted Hughes, which were subsequently accepted by government.”

“The social disparities which give rise to the significant number of aboriginal children in care must be addressed. We call on Minister Christensen to meet at the earliest date with First Nations leaders in the north to review these important recommendations and to jointly develop proactive plans to deal with the social-economic disparities as well as to review the reasons for the disproportionate number of aboriginal children in care’ added Chief John. “The overriding issue is to ensure the safety and well being of children in MCFD care”.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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