

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Statement

December 7, 2020

First Nations Leadership Council Saddened by Sudden Passing of Youth Homelessness Advocate, Katherine McParland

(X̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and səliiw̱ətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.)

The First Nations Leadership Council was deeply saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Katherine McParland this past weekend and joins the community in mourning this tragic loss. Co-founder and Executive Director of A Way Home Kamloops and the Coalition to End Youth Homelessness, Katherine was a fierce advocate dedicated to seeing all youth provided with safe and sustainable housing.

As someone who had previously experienced youth homelessness, Katherine held a personal connection to this issue and dedicated much of her life and career to creating solutions to end youth homelessness. She spoke openly of the challenges she faced in her own early life through her experiences in the child welfare system and eventually into homelessness. After securing stable housing, Katherine went on to complete and undergraduate degree and eventually a master's degree in social work. She used these experiences to propel herself forward as a powerful and ground-breaking advocate, bringing voice and attention to this issue.

Katherine was well known locally, regionally, and nationally and was recognized in 2018 for her numerous contributions with the YMCA Peace Medal and the Heart of the Grasslands Award from the BC Association of Social Workers earlier this year. She has left a profound legacy through her work and numerous achievements that will continue to inspire all those who she touched in her short but impactful time on this earth.

Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, Katherine remained an unstoppable force – tracking impacts of the pandemic upon youth homelessness and creating a program to support impacted youth to find and secure safe, stable housing. Recently Katherine spearheaded a resolution at the BC Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly, calling for an immediate action plan and strategy to address Indigenous Youth Homelessness.

The First Nations Leadership Council had the opportunity to work closely with Katherine over the last year and remains committed to carrying on the work that she dedicated her life to. We send our deepest condolences to her family, her friends and to her community at this time.

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

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