

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

November 19, 2021

### First Nations in BC Experiencing Compounded Emergencies; BC and Canada Must Provide Full Supports

(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tseil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) As BC continues to reel from the ongoing devastation caused by the recent "atmospheric river event", which saw extreme rain, winds, landslides, and floods wreak catastrophe upon communities and infrastructure, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) remains deeply alarmed and concerned about both short-term and long-term cumulative effects of the crisis upon the safety and welfare of First Nation communities.

The FNLC calls upon the provincial and federal governments to commit significant financial supports, and resources to First Nations still recovering from the compounded and ongoing emergencies of the 2021 wildfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, the opioid crisis, the homelessness crisis and the crisis caused by the discovery of the thousands of unmarked graves on the sites of former residential schools.

"From a pandemic, to fires then to floods, First Nations have been forced to shoulder the impacts of colonial-induced climate extremes while navigating the challenges caused by COVID 19 without adequate supports and resources. Over the past week, many First Nations have lost their homes, with little to no support from BC and Canada, while being forced to pay out of pocket to access temporary shelter and food supplies. This is totally unacceptable: time and time again First Nations have borne the brunt of climate change impacts and time and time again the federal and provincial governments have failed to assess and take seriously the risks posed by climate change. BC and Canada must commit to the full reimbursement of all costs that have accumulated for all impacted First Nations, including accommodations and transportation costs, rather than continuing to generously fund a military-style invasion of peaceful land defenders in unceded Wet'suwet'en territory, as a means to advance LNG fossil fuel development. Our hearts go out all the flooding and mudslide survivors, and to the 17,000 people that have been displaced from their homes," stated Grand Chief Stewart Philip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

Despite a [2018 BC Auditor General report](#) concluding that BC was not adequately managing the risks posed by climate change, as well as a [2019 preliminary climate risk assessment](#) citing atmospheric rivers as a risk, BC continues to take a reactionary and inadequate approach to these unprecedented climate disasters. Moving forward, it is imperative to address the immediate needs of those impacted by the floods while simultaneously addressing the long-term cumulative effects that will be felt in BC and beyond. "The time for proactive responses is now," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee of the BC Assembly of First Nations, noting the varying impacts that require immediate attention. "The Fraser River is an essential waterway in the global food chain. The rippling effects of this disruption could be catastrophic for our communities if not adequately addressed and First Nations need to be included in these conversations at the forefront, yet they haven't been thus far."



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ASSEMBLY OF  
FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Rd.  
Prince George, BC  
V2K 5S3

Ph: 778-945-9910  
Fx: 778-945-9916



FIRST  
NATIONS  
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South  
West Vancouver, BC  
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903  
Fx: 604-926-9923  
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF  
BRITISH COLUMBIA  
INDIAN CHIEFS

401 - 312 Main Street  
Vancouver, BC  
V6A 2T2

Ph: 604-684-0231  
Fx: 604-684-5726

"The devastation is vast and can already be felt in the lower mainland and beyond," stated Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "The incalculable impacts that will be felt in our communities from debris, raw sewage, mass exodus of livestock, agricultural, chemical and poisonous materials contamination that is all currently moving downstream is a brewing environmental catastrophe with global implications. We reiterate our call for the Province to declare an indefinite state of emergency, as this flooding has caused what will most certainly be billions of dollars in damage, indefinite displacement of thousands of people, long term environmental effects yet to be contemplated, and serious long term disruption in an already fragile supply chain."

*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).*

For further information, contact:

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President:	(250) 490-5314
Robert Phillips, First Nations Summit Executive	(778) 875-4463
Annette Schroeter, Communications Officer, BCAFN	(778) 281-1655