

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Press Release

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FNLC Marks One-Year Anniversary of Release of *In Plain Sight* – the most challenging work still lies ahead



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(X̱w̱m̱ə̱θ̱ḵw̱ə̱y̱əm (Musqueam), S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú̱7̱mesh (Squamish) and sə̱ḻiḻw̱ə̱ṯə̱ł (Tseil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) marks the one-year anniversary of the release of [In Plain Sight](#), the reports of the independent review of Indigenous-specific racism in BC's health care system, led by Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. *In Plain Sight* provided seminal and evidence-based insight into the pervasive challenges, trauma, and colonial violence confronting Indigenous peoples due to systemic racism in the BC health care system.

The FNLC thanks Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, her team, and all participants for guiding the way to overdue change and helping transform a health-care landscape that has for too long neglected, marginalized, and discriminated against Indigenous Peoples. On this anniversary, the FNLC notes aspects of significant progress, including amendments to the *BC Human Rights Code*, appointment of BC First Nations people into leadership roles across the health system, and efforts to renew First Nations health plans and governance structures.

In Plain Sight also presented compelling evidence that racism is magnified by public health emergencies. These, as well as now compounding and consecutive climate change emergency events have continued to disproportionately harm First Nations people. This work, and the equally difficult work to redevelop complaints processes, and to establish right relations between the Province and First Nations governing bodies, remains ahead.

“Today, we lift up our hands to Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and to everyone who played a part in addressing the systemic and destructive anti-Indigenous racism in our health care system. A year ago, the *In Plain Sight* reports shed much needed light upon the failings of our health-care system and its deeply entrenched structures, processes, and practices that oppress and perpetuate colonial violence against Indigenous peoples,” stated Chief Don Tom, Vice-President of the UBCIC. “Importantly, *In Plain Sight* made a critical recommendation around renewing and strengthening First Nations health agreements and structures so that they are consistent with the implementation of the provincial *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. Work is underway to fulfill this recommendation, with an independent Chiefs’ Committee being struck to engage on the First Nations health governance structure, but sustained support and action from the government and provincial health authorities is vital for ensuring progress continues. Today is an important reminder that much more needs to be done to uplift First Nations sovereign responsibility over the health, safety, and well-being of our peoples.”

“It is important to acknowledge the leadership provided by the health system to immediately apologize for harms, and recruit BC First Nations people and other needed capacity to achieve systemic change. However, we still desperately need change to occur at the point of care – when our people are most vulnerable, in need of aid, and afraid of experiencing racism and mistreatment. Let’s honour the experiences shared by our citizens with the In Plain Sight Review, using their well-being as our moral compass to guide our path forward,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee of BC Assembly of First Nations.

“Everyone needs to speak up against racism. This means that health leadership needs to create workplace cultures where we talk about issues of justice, discrimination, and equity. It means workers need courage to speak up against racism in all forms and have protection from retribution. It means complaints and feedback processes need to be culturally-relevant and safe for Indigenous patients. We will continue speaking up on these issues in order to keep the report and the recommendations alive and in the forefront of our collective agenda,” concluded Lydia Hwitsum of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

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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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