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FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Statement

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FNLC Statement on New Report Highlighting Ongoing Income Gaps and Barriers for Indigenous People in BC

((X^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), S^kwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.: The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) welcomes the stark findings of the report [Income Supports and Indigenous Peoples in B.C.: An Analysis of Gaps and Barriers](#) and calls on the BC Government to take action on its recommendations and the irrefutable evidence presented on the ongoing structures and systems which are trapping Indigenous people in a disproportionate cycle of poverty in this province.

The FNLC is heartened by the work of Dr. Anke Kessler and Dr. Jacqueline Quinless, who collaborated closely with First Nations communities across BC to shine a light on what Indigenous peoples in this province know all too well: that there are long-standing socio-economic inequities that continue to be upheld through colonial policies which create significant income gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in BC that force them to experience an endless cycle of poverty.

This report draws important links between poverty and colonial policies of land dispossession, forced assimilation, oppression, discrimination, and systemic racism. Such policies manifested in the loss of land and culture; fracturing of families and removal of children to residential schools and the child welfare system; disproportionate rates of gender-based violence towards women, girls, and Two-Spirit people; over-representation in the criminal justice system; discrimination in healthcare and education; and entrenchment in poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic also introduced unprecedented challenges and exacerbated pre-existing inequities, making it ever-apparent that dedicated policy solutions and funding are needed to solve the compounding crises affecting Indigenous peoples, particularly elders, women and children, and those with disabilities, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the deadly opioid crisis, housing crisis, and climate emergencies.

The gaps and barriers addressed in this report must be meaningfully addressed by the governments responsible for perpetuating them. Alignment and implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* in BC provides the necessary steps and pathways to break the systemic conditions of poverty that disproportionately impact Indigenous people in BC. However, fulsome redress and reconciliation remains dependent on recognition of inherent Title and Rights, jurisdiction and legal orders, the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*, and will ultimately require governments to accept and hold themselves accountable for their role, both historic and ongoing, in the unacceptable conditions of poverty faced by Indigenous people today.

The FNLC gives thanks to Dr. Anke Kessler and Dr. Jacqueline Quinless for their care and dedication to this research, and to the Nations, community members, and knowledge-keepers who contributed to this important work that captures the long-standing disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in this Province and makes clear the work that must yet be done.

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

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