

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

June 27, 2023

### FNLN Calls for Immediate Implementation of the Recommendations in the RCY's Report: *The Right to Thrive*

(xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLN) is deeply disturbed by the findings reported in the Representative for Children and Youth's (RCY) most recent publication entitled, *The Right to Thrive: An Urgent Call to Recognize, Respect and Nurture Two Spirit, Trans, Non-Binary and other Gender Diverse Children and Youth (The Right to Thrive)*, which illuminates significant human rights violations, experienced by Two Spirit, Trans, Non-Binary and other Gender Diverse (2STNBGD) children and youth, as a result of antiquated, disinformed, discriminative, and deficient system of supports.

This report reveals that 2STNBGD children and youth in British Columbia (B.C.) experience inequitable access to essential gender-affirming care and support, although a fundamental right, reflected in *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and higher rates of suicidal ideation, self-harm, and suicidality, particularly for youth in care and those residing in staffed resources. Conversely, the RCY reports that 2STNBGD children and youth who are supported and affirmed, can experience positive life outcomes, like their cis-gender peers, highlighting the impacts of socio-political and structural inequalities, on an already disenfranchised and racialized population.

"We cannot allow the denigration and discrimination of our 2STNBGD children and youth to go on," said Cheryl Casimer, First Nation Summit Political Executive. "The RCY's report exposes the perverse impacts of societal misconceptions and ideologies that must be addressed through institutional change. System-level reform is necessary to ensure equitable access to gender-affirming supports and care for 2STNBGD children and youth. The mental health of 2STNBGD children and youth should not suffer because of B.C.'s negligence."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) stated, "Last week, as we celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day, protesters gathered outside UBCIC's Vancouver office, and perpetuated discriminative beliefs pertaining to gender diverse people. This proclamation of ignorance, intolerance, and hate illustrates the critical concerns, highlighted by the RCY, in *The Right to Thrive*, including the violation of basic human rights. Our gender diverse children and youth, deserve our love, support, and protection. Similarly, they deserve to have the opportunity to live healthy, safe, and supported lives, like their cisgendered peers."

"I want to acknowledge the tremendous strength and vulnerability of the 2STNBGD youth who shared their stories and experiences of living within the confines of a colonial and intolerant society, said BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Terry Teegee. Each of you are champions for change. Your stories underscore the urgency of systemic transformation to ensure you are granted the respect, care, support, and opportunity to live and thrive in B.C., which your cis-gendered peers are provided. We hear you and it is now our responsibility to advocate on your behalf, calling on the government of B.C. to action your recommendations, as delineated by the RCY."



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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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