

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

July 16, 2024

### **FNLC Responds to RCY's "Don't Look Away" Report; Calls for Truth, Collective Accountability, and Urgent Supports for Our Children**

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliilwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) Today, the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) released a report titled "*Don't Look Away*" which details the broken system for child protection and care in B.C. The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) pleads for children to be placed at the center and calls for careful review and full implementation of the recommendations.

The report tells the heartbreaking story of "Colby", and his sister who suffered the abuse from those who were supposed to act as their caregivers. Colby, as other children whose stories are shared in the report, lost his life to a lack of collective and connected care. The RCY addresses existing models grounded in colonial worldviews as well as systemic patterns that hurt our children, and formulates recommendations for systems of care that promote child and family well-being.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated "We strongly support the RCY report "*Don't Look Away*" which does not shy away from telling the truth, and that puts children's interests in front of our own, as it should be. We honour Colby's legacy and hold prayers for his family and community. The painful reality is that child abuse will continue as long as we allow it. We must foster increased supports and a greater sense of social responsibility, urging all to report risks and signs of harm to our children. Since we embarked on the Tsawwassen Accord with the provincial government back in June 2002, it's been a long and winding road aiming to protect the interests, the rights, the health and the well-being of our children and families. Today, the Province promises to shift to a new government-wide approach to child well-being with a focus on outcomes and prevention."

"We commend and support the work of the RCY and for her comprehensive "*Don't Look Away*" report. We must collectively learn from the heartbreaking and gut-wrenching circumstances, like those that led to the death of Colby. It is unacceptable that these horrific situations have continued to occur in foster homes in BC. It must stop. We need to see real and tangible systemic change that includes collaborative and culturally appropriate approaches, as well as strengthened accountability measures, to prevent similar deaths from occurring in future," said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "We must break down the silos and ensure that the safety and protection of our children is at the centre of our collective work; they are our future. We urge BC to



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take the necessary steps to implement the recommendations of the “*Don’t Looks Away*” report to ensure Colby’s tragic death does not go in vain.”

BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Terry Teegee concluded: "The tragic and entirely preventable death of Colby highlights a profound failure in our collective responsibility to provide connected and holistic care. As detailed in the “*Don’t Look Away*” report, the systemic issues within child protection and care, health care, housing, and income security are painfully clear. The experiences of Colby and the other Indigenous and non-Indigenous children examined in this report must serve as a catalyst for real and immediate change. British Columbia and all relevant agencies must urgently implement the report's recommendations to ensure that no more children or families suffer from the lack of timely and appropriate support. This is a stark call to action for all of us to prioritize the well-being of our most vulnerable community members."

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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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