



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2024CFD0010-001549
Sept. 18, 2024

Ministry of Children and Family Development
Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
First Nations Summit

New accord on child well-being signed by First Nations Leadership Council, Province

VICTORIA – The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and the Province have signed a child well-being accord that recommits how the parties work together to support First Nations children and families.

“The well-being of First Nations children in B.C. continues to be an absolute crisis, with disproportionate numbers of our kids in care and experiencing far too much violence,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. “We prepared the Rising to the Challenge Accord to further prior agreements, such as the 2002 Tsawwassen Accord and the Reconciliation Charter in 2017. This accord represents a serious commitment by Minister Grace Lore and this provincial government to move forward together, recognizing the ongoing, heartbreaking impacts of colonialism on our children and families. At the end of the day, I am a grandfather to 15 grandchildren and two beautiful new great-grandchildren, and I know in my heart that we have to do everything in our power to make positive, transformative change for our kids. This accord represents that commitment.”

The Rising to the Challenge Accord, co-developed by the FNLC and the Province, outlines a shared commitment to create a new approach to child and family well-being. Signed on Sept. 18, 2024, the accord recognizes and upholds that First Nations have the inherent right to self-determination, including jurisdiction over First Nations children and families, and is a step on the pathway to reconciliation.

“The child welfare accord supports the urgent work underway to apply the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canadian law and address the ongoing impacts of colonialism,” said Regional Chief Terry Teegee, B.C. Assembly of First Nations. “The FNLC and the Province of B.C. are united to prioritize self-determination and the inherent rights of First Nations. With this commitment, a collaborative framework will be implemented to ensure that children and families are healthy, safe and connected to essential resources well into the future.”

Building on the Reconciliation Charter of 2017 between Canada, British Columbia and the FNLC, which formalized the commitment to reduce the number of First Nations children in care, keep families together and support First Nations youth to successfully transition out of care, the new accord is a formal commitment for the parties to continue their work together to advance reconciliation. Work undertaken under the accord may encompass changes to law, policy, fiscal models and approaches to data.

“There is nothing more important than the health and well-being of our children, our future

generations! It is imperative that we continue to work collectively to overhaul outdated and colonial laws and policies relating to First Nations child welfare, which for too long have devastated our cultures and our family life,” said Cheryl Casimer, political executive, First Nations Summit. “We need to see real and tangible systemic change that breaks down siloed methods, includes collaborative and culturally appropriate approaches to child welfare and implements a new fiscal model to support government-to-government relationships. This protocol adds to our evolving foundation and ongoing joint commitment for how we will work together with a goal to achieving real and positive change in the coming years. Our children, our families and our communities are relying on us to collectively be successful and this accord helps to set that path.”

There have been significant changes since 2017, such as the Province’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act in 2019. The act established the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as the Province’s framework for reconciliation. B.C. was the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass legislation to formally adopt the internationally recognized standards, which mandate government to bring provincial laws into alignment with the UN Declaration and to develop and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples.

“We have committed to a new vision for child and family services in this province,” said Grace Lore, Minister of Children and Family Development. “This new vision prioritizes child and family well-being and this accord, co-developed with the First Nations Leadership Council, reaffirms our new approach to build a system that supports and uplifts First Nations children and families.”

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

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