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News Release

For immediate release

October 23, 2024

More Jurisdiction, BC Representation Needed for Children and Families Agreement: First Nations Leadership Council

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) First Nations Chiefs and proxies from British Columbia gathered on Treaty 7 territory in Calgary for the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Special Chiefs Assembly to discuss and vote on a resolution regarding the proposed draft final settlement agreement for reforming the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. The resolution was voted down at a national meeting of Chiefs in Calgary last week: 276 chiefs and proxies opposed the resolution, while 147 supported it, with one abstention. The First Nations Leadership Council sees a need for increased representation from BC First Nations in administering the funding, as well as increased decision-making power for First Nations over child and family services.

“As we move forward, First Nations leaders will be focused on transforming a Children and Family Services system that has been deeply rooted in racism and discrimination. There are structural issues with the agreement that prevent a true transformation. We will need full jurisdiction over our own children, as well as ideas, concerns and perspectives from all regions across Canada – including BC – to get this work done,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BCAFN.

UBCIC President, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip said, “First Nations leadership voted to continue the work to build on this draft Final Settlement Agreement to ensure justice and equality for our First Nation children and families. Chiefs were clear: the final version of this agreement must represent the diverse First Nations across Canada and must be predicated on free, prior and informed consent. It must have the flexibility to honour and accommodate the voices of the many jurisdictions – and BC Nations must be included in the administration of the funding.”

“There is a strong call for community-led solutions that honour traditional cultures, laws and practices that must be reflected in the Final Settlement Agreement,” noted Cheryl Casimer, Political Executive of the First Nations Summit. “We must get to work without delay to ensure that First Nations youth are at the table and involved in these discussions and that their voices and experiences be at the forefront of the decisions being made as they are directly impacted.”

The FNLC will advocate for a strength-based approach, finding a unified way to move forward to support the health and well-being of our children and families, based on the inherent rights and self-determination of First Nation, and for the betterment of our children for generations to come.

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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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