

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

NEWS RELEASE

February 2, 2018

BC First Nations Leadership Council applauds Canadian Human Rights Tribunal Order: Federal government must act

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver) – The BC First Nations Leadership Council applauds the fourth legal order issued by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) against the federal government. This marks yet another victory for First Nations children and families that have been racially discriminated against by the government. The First Nations Leadership Council also applauds the work of Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Assembly of First Nations, Chiefs of Ontario, and other First Nation leaders, for their perseverance and dedication to bringing about systemic change for the benefit of First Nations children and families across the country.

The Panel is clear that, notwithstanding its 2016 Decision and orders for remedial measures, the Government of Canada continues to discriminate against First Nations children and families by inadequately funding child welfare services and perpetuating a system of inequitable services that is perversely based on incentives that bring First Nation children into care. Canada has also failed to adhere to Jordan's Principle, which aims to ensure that First Nations children can access all public services in way that reflects First Nations unique cultures, and that is without delays, denial or disruptions related to their First Nation status.

The Government of Canada must take major steps now to end the discrimination, and to work with the parties and Indigenous people to reform the system to support child and family well-being. The First Nations Leadership Council fully expects Canada to comply with the Panel's further orders and provide the needs-based resources to ensure First Nations children and families have equitable access to services, based on actual costs. First Nations in BC are fully ready to engage in solutions on how to address this situation and reform the system.

BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated: "Our children are precious – they will carry our stories, history and future. The federal government must immediately stop underfunding services for First Nations children in all areas. First Nations communities in BC have their own policies, laws and processes for caring for their children. We applaud the ruling today by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, and thank all the leaders who have been fighting for our children against racist federal policies."

"It is concerning that the Panel found that the seriousness and emergency of the issue is not grasped with some of Canada's actions and responses to the 2016 Decision and orders, and that federal policy remains discriminatory and is still perpetuating discrimination," said Cheryl Casimer, of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "It is time to take the giant steps the Panel speaks of to reform the whole system, and to remove all incentives to bring Indigenous children into care. As the Panel rightly points out, Canada has international and domestic obligations towards upholding the best interests of children. Canada has additional obligations towards Indigenous children under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, the honor of the Crown, Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and its fiduciary relationship, to name a few. These must guide the Government in its work with the parties and



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

312 – 345 Chief Alex
Thomas Way,
Kamloops, BC, V2H 1H1

Ph: 250-828-9757
Fx: 250-828-9893



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

Indigenous peoples from today forward.” She added, “The Panel’s Order obliges the federal government to move away from talk to action.”

“Canada’s non-compliance with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling has severely damaged and impeded Canada’s relationship with First Nations peoples. The Tribunal retaining jurisdiction and oversight over the implementation of the CHRT ruling is a strong comment on the slow pace of implementation of the orders to date”, stated Chief Bob Chamberlin, Vice-President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “Our children cannot wait on incremental change and the bureaucratic processes of the Canadian government, significant and lasting change must be an immediate priority.”

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.

For further comment please contact:

Chief Bob Chamberlin, Vice-President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs: (778) 988-9282

Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive: 778-875-2157

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, RPF - BC Assembly of First Nations: (250) 299-2030