

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

April 24, 2024

FNLN Appalled by BC Prosecution Services Failure to Seek Justice for Jared Lowndes

(Xw̓məθkwəy̓ əm (Musqueam), S̓kw̓x̓ wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tseil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLN) is shocked and angered to learn that the BC Prosecution Service will not be pursuing charges on three RCMP officers responsible for the killing of Jared Lowndes, a member of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation, in Campbell River on July 8, 2021. In 2022, the [Independent Investigations Office](#) recommended charges against the three officers involved, stating "reasonable grounds exist to believe that three officers may have committed offences in relation to various uses of force.

"Less than a month after the BC Prosecution Service stayed manslaughter charges against police officers responsible for the death of Dale Culver, we are here yet again at the helm of closed-door investigations that uphold instead of dismantle the colonial and racist institution of the RCMP. We cannot accept these decisions as the status quo, and we demand immediate answers for Jared's family. Imminent review of the criminal justice system must be prioritized by our government in full partnership with the rights and title holders of British Columbia. We cannot let yet another death of our family members mark the continued inaction and failure of a system we never consented to," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations.

"This decision reopens wounds for Jared's family and only drives this issue of colonial violence perpetuated by the justice system further. Shame on the BC Prosecution Service and shame on the RCMP for this grave injustice. The BC Prosecution Service must stop blindly sanctioning the use of deadly force against Indigenous citizens in BC. First Nations cannot continue to live in fear of RCMP officers unfettered actions that have no consequence. Indigenous people are more than 10 times more likely to be murdered by the police in Canada than non-Indigenous people. This tells us that the system is broken beyond repair, and we demand accountability of the BC Prosecution Service," stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

Hugh Braker, First Nations Summit Political Executive stated, "Many decades ago, Canada abolished the death penalty. Even if Parliament had not abolished the death penalty, our Constitution would now probably prohibit it. Courts cannot, after hearing all the evidence sentence someone to death. Yet the police today seem to believe that they can avoid the courts and trial, and simply kill a First Nations person before that person is even arrested. Had Mr. Lowndes been arrested and convicted, he probably would have received a prison sentence of a year or two. Instead, the police gave him death. The abolishment of the death penalty must



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apply to the police also." Braker concluded, "This decision by the Prosecution service to not lay charges against the three police officers in question casts doubt on the BC Solicitor General's Ministry and Attorney General's Ministry support for, or faith in, the Independent Investigation Office (IIO). The IIO was formed to 'independently' examine police officers' actions and, where necessary, recommend charges. They recommended charges here. First Nations' people cannot be faulted for a complete lack of faith in, or support for, the existing Justice System. We reaffirm the need for BC Attorney General Niki Sharma and BC Solicitor General Mike Farnworth to work with First Nations immediately to prevent further injustice and identify a path forward for Jared's family."

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