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FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL WELCOMES BILL C-92: AN ACT RESPECTING FIRST NATIONS, INUIT, AND MÉTIS CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

(Musqueam Territory, Vancouver, BC – March 1, 2018) – The BC First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) welcomes today’s introduction of Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. Critical aspects of this legislation are its development between federal and Indigenous partners, and that it seeks to affirm Indigenous peoples' inherent right to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services.

“The devastating impacts of separating children from their families, communities and cultures will now be diminished as Indigenous children’s best interests will be prioritized under the jurisdiction of their own communities. Keeping children connected to their families and to their culture will work to make Indigenous communities and Nations stronger and healthier” states BC Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

“We are pleased with today’s introduction of *Bill C-92 - An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. This legislation will greatly assist in our collective efforts to address the terrible legacy of residential schools and the systemic removal of children from our communities. This is arguably one of the most important pieces of legislation for Indigenous peoples in a generation as it will lead to improving outcomes for Indigenous children and youth by changing focus from intervention and separation to strengthening and keeping families together”, said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the UBCIC, stated “as First Nations we have long fought to reassert our Inherent jurisdiction over our children, and although encouraged that Bill C-92 provides that opportunity to our nations, commitment is needed for statutory funding in the legislation to undertake jurisdiction agreements. We will seek amendments to have the implementation of Jordan’s Principal be specifically included in the legislation. Now that Bill C-92 is released, we are planning a province-wide All Chiefs’ meeting to further discuss issues and concerns. UBCIC honours the long line of Indigenous women and matriarchs who have led this fight.”

British Columbia’s deeply flawed system of services to support children, including children with complex needs, was recently exposed in December 2018 in the report *Alone and Afraid: Lessons learned from the ordeal of a child with*

special needs and his family. Bill C-92 will provide the impetus to make the much needed changes that have been repeatedly called for by First Nations leaders.

The FNLC thanks all those that have been involved in the drafting of this legislation and looks forward to seeing a smooth transition and implementation of the proposed Act and, together with the government of Canada, explore the creation of a national transition committee.

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