



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release  
October 10, 2020**

### **BC Assembly of First Nations Recognizes World Homeless Day**

*(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – October 10, 2020)* – BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) recognizes World Homeless Day, as per *BCAFN Resolution 08/2020: Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On and Off-Reserve*, and stands in solidarity with those experiencing chronic, transitional, or episodic homelessness, in addition to those living in poor quality housing or at risk of becoming homeless. Stigma and social alienation often accompany homelessness and BCAFN urges the public to treat those experiencing homelessness with compassion, dignity and respect.

It is broadly known that Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in homeless populations in British Columbia and across Canada. In the most recent (2018) Report on Homeless Counts in B.C., Indigenous peoples represented 38% of respondents, despite comprising only 6% of the provincial population. Similarly, Indigenous peoples were also overrepresented in the “unsheltered” category of homelessness, as opposed to “sheltered.” It is clear that Indigenous-led interventions are required to address this long-standing injustice.

Various factors contribute to homelessness; in BC, the main causes of homelessness are lack of income and unaffordable housing. For Indigenous peoples, these factors are compounded by higher rates of addiction, mental health problems, and lower levels of education. It is important to understand that these factors are simply symptoms of a broad system that spurs socio-economic inequality. Colonial tactics, including policy and legislation such as Indian residential and day schools, the 60s scoop, forced displacement from land, and introduction of fatal diseases all contribute to high rates of Indigenous youth in care, language, cultural and traditional knowledge loss, lateral and external violence, inter-generational trauma and more. Indigenous peoples’ experiences with homelessness are unique from non-Indigenous people.

As municipal, provincial and federal governments take steps to address homelessness, BCAFN calls on them to collaborate with First Nations to co-develop housing strategies, including transitional and permanent housing solutions that are culturally appropriate and are wrap-around in nature to support Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. Additionally, including Indigenous peoples who are currently or were formerly homeless in the planning of housing strategies will increase the likelihood of such strategies’ success in achieving sustainable solutions.

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