



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS
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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
February 24, 2022

BCAFN Celebrates Supreme Court Ruling In Favour of Unhoused Community in Prince George

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC) — The BC Assembly of First Nations is pleased to welcome the recent verdict in *Prince George (City) v. Johnny*. Once again, the Supreme Court of British Columbia has ruled against the City of Prince George's attempts to dismantle an encampment, known as "Moccasin Flats," located within a vacant lot in Prince George.

"Justice Coval's decision is a win for First Nations and human rights," said Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "By continuing to target the unhoused, Prince George leadership have betrayed their commitments to reconciliation. Evidence-based policy solutions and trauma-informed practices are integral to lasting reconciliation with First Nations, particularly as survivors of the Residential School system, the 60s Scoop, and other destructive colonial policies."

After losing an initial court case in October 2021, which also sought to dismantle Moccasin Flats, the City tried a different legal route – but the result was the same. Moreover, the most recent ruling affirmed that Prince George's current shelter availability does not necessarily translate into actual shelter space accessible to encampment residents. The City's multiple efforts to remove Moccasin Flats before working to address the root cause for such encampments have created additional strain on service providers and inflicted further trauma on unhoused individuals in Prince George, of whom at least 80% are Indigenous.

Additionally, the City's partial demolition of Moccasin Flats in November 2021 was deemed to be in contravention of the October 2021 *Stewart Order*, which authorized the encampment to remain in place unless and until the City demonstrated available and accessible housing and daytime facilities. As Justice Coval noted, "this breach inflicted serious harm on vulnerable people." Furthermore, the City attempted to evade responsibility for this Supreme Court violation by claiming that B.C. Housing had organized and executed the effort. However, the City's own evidence from their Bylaw Manager stated that Bylaw personnel were involved.

"Targeting the unhoused is unethical, illegal, and ineffective," continued Regional Chief Teegee. "Encampments are not a long-term solution; however, deliberately removing people's shelters before providing acceptable housing options is simply cruel. If the City of Prince George is serious about addressing homelessness and advancing reconciliation, then they must drastically change their approach to this complex crisis."

#honouringourancestors



The BCAFN celebrates Justice Coval's ruling upholding encampment residents' right to inhabit Moccasin Flats until adequate housing options become available to them. The BCAFN continues to press for evidence-based policies and trauma-informed practices, and urges the City of Prince George to work collaboratively with First Nations, service providers, and other community partners to develop housing for our most vulnerable and marginalized community members.

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