



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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### **BCAFN Calls for the Urgent Protection of Mother Earth**

**(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, BC – Apr. 22, 2020)** – BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) is celebrating Mother Earth Day today and calls attention to the urgency of protecting her. Mother Earth is warming due to the cumulative human-produced greenhouse emissions released to the atmosphere. The increase in temperatures is impacting the natural balance of the earth and its natural cycles. Environmental pollution and degradation are killing water sources, contaminating the ocean, the land and the air. Nature and biodiversity are declining globally at unprecedented rates. One million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, more than ever before in human history.

“Today we celebrate the blessings of our Mother Earth who provides us with everything we need to live, including food, water, and the air we breathe. We must nurture the life we are given and the culture, spirituality and ecological knowledge that is sustained by everything that surrounds and supports us,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “When she flourishes... we flourish.”

The COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) pandemic, which has now infected over 2.5 million world-wide, is rooted in the disrespect and exploitation of animals and the environment. First Nations have a fundamental role to respond to this challenge because of deep and close cultural and spiritual connections to Mother Earth which provides the knowledge to holistically steward our lands and waters.

A systemic shift is needed to create a just, clean and sustainable economy that supports people's wellbeing and protects Mother Earth. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggests that to avoid catastrophic consequences, we need to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Green-house gas emissions must be reduced, and economic policies must be grounded in this reality.

The post COVID-19 pandemic has caused a socio-economic crisis in Canada and BC, but it could also be an opportunity to tackle climate change and environmental issues if we apply a climate lens to identify clean investments in the design of the economic recovery package and build a just transition towards a strong, long term, resilient economy for everybody.

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