



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

**June 21, 2020**

### **BCAFN CALLS CANADA TO ACTION ON NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY 2020**

**(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – June 21, 2020)** – Today, Sunday June 21<sup>st</sup>, First Nations and Canadians are celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day, and on this important day, the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) calls for immediate and urgent action in the Canadian systems of policing, justice and healthcare. While Canada largely enjoys an international reputation for being a tolerant, diverse nation comprised of people from many racial, ethnic, cultural and religious groups the deeply entrenched racism in our society creates much suffering and death amongst Indigenous peoples, Black Canadians and those who are racialized.

2020 has been a challenging year with the COVID-19 pandemic and the violence and killings of numerous Indigenous people at the hands of the RCMP/police across Canada and the practice of “games” by healthcare workers. Systemic racism must end, and actions must be immediately taken to stop targeting and endangering human lives. In addition, one year has passed since the release of *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* that delivered 231 individual Calls for Justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries and all Canadians. First Nations leaders across Canada are deeply disappointed that the expected *Action Plan* that was to be delivered by the federal government has been delayed. Together, we need to understand our shared history, and urgently work on advancing our joint efforts toward a better future for Indigenous Peoples and all Canadians.

“We take this time to not only celebrate our cultures, languages and histories, but we also reflect on this difficult relationship First Nations share with Canada. Too many of the institutions and people working within them fail Indigenous peoples. Despite this we are focused on moving forward by building and contributing to healthy and prosperous Nations. We continue to participate in the process of reconciliation and steer the course toward advancing Title, Rights and Treaty Rights,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee and staff will be joining family, friends and communities to embrace and showcase their diverse cultures, knowledge, history and languages. Many creative physical distancing methods have been developed and made available including online Live Facebook feeds, drive thru activities and vehicle parades. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges to the celebrations, but organizers remain determined and flexible in their planning. British Columbians are invited and encouraged to join these celebrations many of which are broadcast virtually.

*National Indigenous Peoples Day was recognized for the first time in Canada as National Aboriginal Day in 1996 following a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples the year before. June 21st, the summer solstice, has been chosen as the day to honour the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples who have lived on this land since time immemorial.*

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