



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### BCAFN Stands in Solidarity with Indigenous Communities as We Remember Those Lost to Violence

**(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC and Heiltsuk Territory, Bella Bella, BC – February 14, 2022)** – This year marks the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual February 14th Women's Memorial March, held on the territory of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), S<sup>k</sup>w<sup>x</sup>wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver to remember and grieve the Indigenous women, Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people (2SLGBTQIA+) who have gone missing or been found murdered. For decades, family members and advocates have counted and honoured each life lost and called for justice and accountability. Marches, walks, and rallies are also occurring across the province, in a powerful demonstration of the love held for those lost, and resistance to the destructive forces of colonial racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated, "Systemic and inter-personal racism continues to be rampant in how government and the systems of justice operate with regard to Indigenous peoples – especially women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. There are mountains of reports and testimony that bear this out, and there is no defence for the lack of political will that has been shown to actually create transformational change. Canadians should be shocked and outraged! This is a decades-long crises, that in fact originated with colonial contact and now in 2022 is only intensifying. We require coordinated and well-resourced support from provincial and federal government to empower Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people to lead us and reclaim their rightful place, wherein all Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are safe, well, and empowered to live their lives fully."

Louisa Housty-Jones, BC AFN Women's Representative stated, "The realities of residential schools and MMIWG2S+ are interconnected through their root causes and impacts. This country is experiencing a reckoning with the confirmations of those who did not return home from residential schools. It is a stark reminder to each of us that for there to be reconciliation, there must be truth, and there must be justice and healing. The marches today represent an opportunity to hear and take to heart the experience of Indigenous peoples and the families that have lost loved ones to violence. Those who have been lost are deeply loved, valued, and forever missed. We must also uplift the families, advocates and grassroots people with concrete actions. Many have been out doing the work without appropriate funding and support. As someone who is involved in preventing and addressing violence in my community, I can personally speak to the critical gap in terms of what is needed and what is available."

In the midst of very challenging circumstances, First Nations in BC continue to advance our inherent rights to self-determination, recognizing that the full implementation of rights affirmed through the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* are the basis of strong First Nations communities and holistic wellness. BCAFN calls on all governments and sectors of society to support concrete action on the Calls for Justice and region-specific reports. The multitude of recommendations provided by family members, advocates, grassroots organizations, and Indigenous leadership point to a path forward that all Canadians must walk together.

**For further information, contact:**

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