

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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First Nations Leadership Council Calls for Immediate Action to Address Colonial Violence Against First Nations Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People

(Xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) On the third anniversary of the release of the National Inquiry's Final Report and Calls for Justice, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is deeply troubled by the lack of progress to implement the Calls for Justice. Despite the finding of genocide made by the National Inquiry, and the horrific experiences of systemic discrimination and violence that were brought to light, the Canadian and British Columbian governments' work on this issue has been marked by a lack of committed resources, poor communication and coordination, and inadequate partnership with First Nations people.

Violence against Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) people continues to intensify, including rates of domestic violence against women and girls in what has been termed a [Shadow Pandemic](#) by the United Nations since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, we have not seen substantive changes since the National Inquiry to address these growing rates of gender-based violence or meaningful redress to dismantle their colonial underpinnings. Government commitments to address systemic causes of violence, including human insecurity are wholly insufficient. Supports for victims, family members, and communities of those who have gone missing or been murdered also remain in a patchwork state and leave families to navigate a Justice System which has been shown to be racist and discriminatory towards Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, exposing them to (re)traumatization.

Budget 2021 provided for \$2.2 billion over 5 years and \$160.9 million per year on-going to respond to the Calls for Justice; however, we have yet to see changes on the ground that point toward transformative change. While there were broad commitments to address gender-based violence in Budget 2022, there were no additional funds specifically earmarked to address the disproportionate violence against Indigenous women and girls.

In addition to resourcing and capacity issues, movement on the National Action Plan is hampered by the lack of proper partnerships with Indigenous women, families, First Nations governments and organizations, and front line and grass roots organizations. The FNLC urges renewed action based on true partnership that recognizes the urgency of the situation. Each day where the status quo prevails is one where Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are at risk, and experience unacceptable violence.

The FNLC calls on the governments of Canada and BC to immediately prioritize ending gender-based violence and to treat the MMIWG2S+ crisis with the urgency demanded to end genocide once and for all in this country as has been mandated by the National Inquiry and UN Declaration. The FNLC urges all members of the public, and companies and organizations in all sectors to become informed about the Calls for Justice and issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, take action, and hold those in power accountable.



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“In my heart I know that Indigenous women will be the ones to lead us out of the racist aftermath and violent sexist legacy of colonialism; however, their strength and leadership alone will not end the crisis of MMIWG2S+ perpetrated by men across this country. The Canadian governments, private industry, the Canadian public, and men and boys have a long-overdue moral and legal obligation to implement the Calls for Justice to end the centuries of violence and hold up our women, girls, and gender-diverse relatives.” Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

“Why must we still ask how many Indigenous Women and Girls have, and will continue, to fall victim, because of the glacial pace and inaction of governments to fully implement the National Inquiry’s Final Report and Calls for Justice,” said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS Political Executive. “While we appreciate the identification of significant resourcing by the federal government to implement Calls to Justice, it is absolutely imperative governments fully engage in full partnership with Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) people, especially those who have been victims of violence, in the implementation of any federal and provincial MMIWG Action Plans. Given the process to date, we remain deeply concerned that successful implementation can be achieved.”

Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated, "We've seen lots of lofty commitments, yet very little serious work to address the systemic violence faced by First Nations women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. We need a proper accountability framework and renewed relationships in place to do this difficult work. It's been a year since the release of the National Action Plan to implement the Calls for Justice and there is still no concrete plan or timelines for implementation or measurement of outcomes. As immediate steps, Canada should establish an independent oversight mechanism for implementing the National Action Plan, and create a National Indigenous Human Rights Ombudsperson and National Indigenous Human Rights Tribunal as called for in Call for Justice 1.7. The Crowns also need to recognize that addressing the abuses of the justice and policing systems is a central pillar of ending violence against First Nations women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. First Nations need to be supported to stand up our own laws and systems of justice."

Louisa Housty-Jones, BCAFN Women's Representative stated, "Survivors and families must remain at the centre of this work. They continue to bear the immense weight of these tragedies and the fight for justice with very little resourcing and support. I urge all governments, and those in the public and private sectors to truly partner with First Nations peoples as partners and leaders in the implementation of the Calls for Justice. We know what we need, and we know our strengths. We are leaders, advisors, knowledge keepers, teachers, healers, helpers, policy makers, legislators, ceremonial people, front line workers, technicians, academics, program designers and action-ers, mothers, family members, community members, and much more. I challenge everyone - counter the colonial tools of fear, control, and division and do this work in love, trust and collaboration. Together, it is possible to create safe and well communities."

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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