

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## Media Release

June 10, 2022

### FNLC Statement on Special Interlocutor

**((X<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), S<sup>k</sup>wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.:** The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) welcomes the appointment of Kimberly R. Murray, a Mohawk woman from Kanehsata:ke, as Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools across Canada. We call on Canada to ensure that her role as Special Interlocutor is fully resourced and mandated to the highest extent and to further appoint a Special Prosecutor to bring justice to Indigenous peoples for the crimes committed by Canada and the Church, and together bring our children home.

The FNLC acknowledges the hard work and experience Ms. Murray brings to this position, particularly from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). However, it cannot be forgotten that Canada bridled the work of the TRC, denying key documents and refusing to issue the TRC a mandate to investigate crimes committed at former Residential Schools. The limitations placed on the TRC cannot be allowed again.

“The FNLC is concerned that the current mandate for the Special Interlocutor is short-sighted and limited in scope. This mandate must include an international and human rights legal framework, be built upon the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and uphold the highest standards, Protocols, and conventions involving missing persons and genocide to address the severity of crimes that have been committed at former Residential Schools across Canada,” said Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive.

Investigations into the unmarked graves require international oversight, particularly as we have witnessed a surge of denial, hate, and open attacks on Indigenous peoples for speaking up about missing children and unmarked graves. Canada cannot be relied on to investigate itself for crimes in which it is implicated. We believe a Special Prosecutor is needed to gather documents and consider criminal responsibility. We remain concerned that these disappearances and burials are not being treated as criminal matters, and that the entities that ran the schools, have not been compelled to turn over all information and evidence in their possession, hampering crucial investigations.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated, “This Special Prosecutor role must be seized as an opportunity for serious, comprehensive action and amount to real change. Further, the FNLC is calling on Ms. Murray to share all reports with First Nations Chiefs and leaders in advance of public release in alignment with their inherent Rights and to establish Protocol for communities reeling with the (re)traumatizing impacts of investigations into their missing children.”

“Canada must see the abduction, violent abuse, and murder of our children for what it was – systematic state-sponsored genocide of our people and ways of being. While they failed miserably in their pursuit of forced assimilation, those who perpetrated



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these crimes must be held to account and brought to justice with the full force of domestic and international law through nothing less than rigorous independent investigations,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

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*The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.*

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