



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

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BCAFN Calls to Action on National Indigenous Peoples Day 2023: Fostering Reconciliation and Equity

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC) – The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) is joining in celebrations across the country with people from many diverse Nations as they come together to acknowledge and honour Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Today is not only a day of celebration but also a powerful call to action for a more inclusive and equitable Canada. Canadians have an invaluable opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with First Nations peoples, learn more about their vast and rich histories, and actively support the continuing journey of reconciliation.

“This day holds significant meaning for me and serves as a symbol of resilience, strength, and vibrant celebration of First Nations’ cultural heritage. It enables Indigenous peoples across the country to educate, raise awareness, and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes about their languages, and cultures,” states Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “Moreover, we take this time to reflect upon the struggles endured by our ancestors, from colonization and forced assimilation to the ongoing fight for self-determination and recognition of our inherent rights. We lift up their voices, celebrate their achievements, and honour their invaluable contributions to the fabric of our society.”

To make progress, Canadians must engage in continual and meaningful conversations that drive substantial changes in the country’s understanding of its colonial history and the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. It is necessary for ongoing reflection, fostering empathy and an unwavering commitment to uncovering the truth about the past. Many of these truths are laid bare in reports from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Implementing the necessary calls to action requires dedicated and sustained efforts, commitment, and collaboration from all levels of society. Through education, dialogue and purposeful action Canada can work toward healing and build meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples.

A critical measure advancing reconciliation and ensuring the protection of Indigenous rights and self-determination is the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) by Canada’s federal and provincial governments. Today the BCAFN also celebrates strides made in the work to establish mechanisms, such as the British Columbia Declaration Act Secretariat and Canada’s United Nations Declaration Action Plan, that ensure governments’ accountability and commitments made under the legislations are upheld.

Join First Nations as they showcase the vibrant diversity of their cultures, languages, arts, and traditions, through cultural events, ceremonies, storytelling, music, dance, and art. By actively participating, Canadians can gain a deeper appreciation of First Nations cultures and build a greater sense of unity and shared identity.

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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