

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

April 29, 2024

### Leadership Council Joins Calls for Public Inquiry into RCMP Deaths of Indigenous Peoples After Charges Dropped Against Jared Lowndes' Killers

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is outraged that the RCMP continue evading charges for killing First Nations people, and is joining calls for a public inquiry into this crisis.

On Tuesday April 23<sup>rd</sup>, the B.C. Prosecution Services (BCPS) announced that no charges had been approved against the RCMP officers who killed Wet'suwet'en man Jared Lowndes in July, 2021. This followed an April 5<sup>th</sup> announcement that charges were being stayed against RCMP officers in the 2017 death of Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan man Dale Culver, and an October 2023 announcement that no charges were approved against the RCMP officers who killed Everett Patrick of the Lake Babine Nation in 2020. In all cases, charges were not approved or stayed despite the findings by the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) that officer(s) committed offences. The Chief Civilian Director of the IIO is also now calling for answers.

Laura Holland, mother of Jared Lowndes, stated, "It is time we had a look at the archaic, racist policies, procedures & laws that are upheld by the BCPS and Law Enforcement that maim, injure and kill Indigenous people in B.C. and Canada. For too long, the BCPS has been permitted to hide behind these unjust policies, procedures, and laws to protect the police officers who commit crimes, inflicting pain and punishment on Indigenous people. It is time for transformative change. Enough is enough. Both these systems must be held accountable before any acts of reconciliation are possible. The truth must be heard."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated "We are absolutely appalled with the gross, racist miscarriage of justice through the continued failure of the BCPS to prosecute public officers for killing First Nations people. We stand with the families of Jared Lowndes, Dale Culver and Everett Patrick, and all Indigenous peoples who have needlessly lost loved ones at the hands of the RCMP. We demand a public inquiry into the suspicious deaths of Indigenous peoples by the very individuals who are supposed to be protecting us. Based on these factual experiences, we have very little faith in this so-called justice system."

"It is extremely rare for the police watchdog to question the decision of the BCPS, much less demand answers as the IIO Chief Civilian Director Ron MacDonald did upon hearing that charges had been dropped against the RCMP officers who killed Jared Lowndes," stated Hugh Braker, First Nations Summit Political Representative. "We will be seeking an urgent meeting with the B.C. Attorney General and the B.C. Solicitor General to demand answers and a public inquiry. We are shocked and angered, and will not be backing down on seeking justice."

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, B.C. Assembly of First Nations, concluded "My family is still reeling with the loss of my cousin Everett Patrick at the hands of the RCMP, and knowing that his death is part of a systemic pattern of state-sponsored killing of Indigenous peoples is extremely disturbing and sickening.



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Our thoughts and prayers are with Laura Holland and Jared Lowndes' whole family and community. Becoming an RCMP officer is not supposed to be a license to kill, yet the statistics tell a different story, and articulate a sobering portrait of how Indigenous peoples are being treated on the ground."

-30-

*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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