



## BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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**BCAFN SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY**  
**March 9-10, 2023**  
**Hybrid - In person & online via Zoom**

**Resolution 07/2023**

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS JUSTICE CENTRE EXPANSION PLAN**

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**MOVED BY: CHIEF JERRY JACK, MOWACHAHT/MUCHLAHT FIRST NATION**

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**SECONDED BY: PROXY ANNIE SILVER, CHEAM FIRST NATION**

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**DECISION: CARRIED**

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### **WHEREAS:**

- A. Following engagement with First Nations over two years (2018-19), in 2020, the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the "Strategy") was finalized and endorsed by the Province of BC;
- B. In 2020, the Chiefs-in-Assembly of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), working together as the First Nations Leadership Council, provided a mandate for the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) to implement the Strategy;
- C. In 2021, Canada signed on to a tripartite memorandum of understanding with BCFNJC and the Province of BC;
- D. Strategy 4 calls for the establishment of a network of 15 Justice Centres (IJs) across British Columbia by 2025, and for BCFNJC to engage with First Nations in BC on the plan for the roll-out of Justice Centres across BC;

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- E. IJC's provide wrap around services for Indigenous people in conflict with the law, including legal advice and representation on child protection and criminal law matters; advocacy and support for dealing with police service agencies; social services and matters involving the Ministry of Children and Family Services; Gladue Report writing and aftercare services; referrals, and more;
- F. IJC's are intended to be built with the consent of the host community and reflective of their needs and vision for legal services. IJC's are also intended to be strategically located in areas with existing justice infrastructure (e.g. First Nations Court, Provincial Court, local justice service provision agencies etc.), demonstrated need (e.g. caseloads), and where organizational capacity at the community level is available to assist with staffing, operations, and other matters;
- G. In 2020, despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, following engagement with local First Nations and justice service providers, three (3) brick and mortar IJC's were established in Merritt, Prince George, and Prince Rupert;
- H. Born out of the pandemic, in 2021, a Virtual Indigenous Justice Centre (VIJC) was created to provide even greater access to justice for Indigenous peoples in BC and to also serve Indigenous peoples who fall outside the catchment areas of the first three (3) IJC's;
- I. In November 2022, Premier David Eby announced the Safer Communities Action Plan, which included funding tied to a strict 2-year timeline for the creation of 10 IJC's: five (5) regional/urban IJC's in 2023, and five (5) hub IJC's in 2024;
- J. Due to the strict funding timeline imposed by the Province of BC, the Directors of the BC First Nations Justice Council made the decision to open the first five (5) of the 10 IJC's in the following urban centers: Vancouver, Surrey, Victoria, Nanaimo, and Kelowna;
- K. In December 2022, the BCFNJC issued a Request for Proposals for external support for engagement with First Nations and Indigenous justice service providers in both the initial 5 urban IJC's (to open in 2023), and the yet to be determined locations for the remaining 5 IJC's (to open in 2024);
- L. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:

**Article 4:** Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as

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well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions;

**Article 5:** Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State;

**Article 34:** Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, in the cases where they exist, juridical systems or customs, in accordance with international human rights standards;

**Article 39:** Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration;

- M. BCFNJC acknowledges that providing quality access to justice for all BC First Nations will require a network greater than just 15 IJC's and is actively advocating for solutions to address this;
- N. The tight funding timeline and the many demands on time for First Nations leadership, the BCFNJC is seeking support from the Chiefs-in-Assembly for the IJC expansion plan and in particular, engagement regarding IJC site selection and host communities for the 5 yet to be determined IJC's to open in 2024; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly supports the BCFNJC plan for opening 10 Indigenous Justice Centres in the next two-years to meet the needs of First Nations peoples in BC; and
2. The BCAFN Chiefs in Assembly calls on the BCAFN Executive to seek other organizations who have a shared interest in working with the BCFNJC, to work collaboratively and develop a business plan for hosting an IJC within their traditional territories.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Terry Teegee', is written over a horizontal line.

**Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief**