



MEDIA RELEASE

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BCFNJC Receives Funding from the Province of British Columbia to Design of Pilot Program to address Structural Factors Contributing to Indigenous Overrepresentation in the Criminal Justice System

tkwəłniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory, BC: Recommendations from an independent investigation into ‘repeat offenders’ were announced today by the Province of BC. Among these was a recommendation for the Province to fund the development of a pilot project, designed and led by the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) to address the structural factors that contribute to overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system. While BCFNJC remains concerned that the investigation was conducted without disaggregated race-based data, we are pleased with the Province’s swift action in accepting this recommendation.

The pilot will be developed and, if fully funded, led by the BCFNJC Indigenous Justice Centre (IJC) in Prince George, BC which houses a diverse team committed to providing wrap-around legal services to the city and surrounding communities. Indigenous-led initiatives, rooted in Indigenous culture and laws, are the only way to build strong solutions. The BC First Nations Justice Strategy and the IJCs have the potential to be that solution, promoting diversion and offering comprehensive services to the most vulnerable Indigenous people in BC.

“We welcome the Province’s announcement as a step in the right direction” said BCFNJC Chair, Doug White. “Too often the underlying factors driving contact with the criminal justice system go ignored. Funding dedicated to better understanding these factors is limited, and the existing culturally appropriate supports and programs are insufficient. With this pilot, the BCFNJC intends to focus on harm reduction, education, and providing the necessary supports that promote diversion and healing for our people and communities.”

BC First Nations Justice Council

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Ensuring that individuals can develop and maintain a personal connection at IJCs across British Columbia, but especially in Prince George, is important for ensuring that the cycle of harm is no longer repeated and that individuals can grow and heal to find safety and security in a good way.

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About the BCFNJC:

The BC First Nations Justice Council has been entrusted with the mandate to transform the justice system and create better outcomes for Indigenous people through implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy.

The Strategy, signed March 06, 2020, was jointly developed by the BC First Nations Justice Council, BC First Nations communities and the Province of British Columbia. It includes 43 actions along two paths which involve the reformation of the current system as well as the restoration of First Nations' legal traditions and structures.

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