



For Immediate Release
November 1st, 2023

Silos and Silence No More: BCFNJC Releases What We Heard Report from its 2023 First Nations Justice Forum

Report Captures Key Insights and Priorities from Rightsholders on Transforming the Justice System and Advancing the BC First Nations Justice Strategy

(Okanagan Syilx Territory, Westbank BC): The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) is pleased to release the *What We Heard Report* from the second annual First Nations Provincial Justice Forum (Justice Forum) that was held on March 6-8, 2023. The 2023 Justice Forum brought together First Nations leaders and representatives from across BC to discuss their shared vision for restored justice and the implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy).

BCFNJC is currently leading the implementation of the Strategy, which is comprised of 25 individual strategies and 43 lines of actions designed to reform the current justice system and restore Indigenous legal orders, traditions, and structures. At the 2023 Justice Forum, Rightsholders were updated on the Strategy's progress and were able to share their insights on the Strategy's key components and initiatives, including on Indigenous Justice Centres, Gladue services, justice for Indigenous women and girls, a National Indigenous Justice Strategy, and much more.

Overwhelmingly, a charged sense of purpose and commitment was felt and expressed by attendees– a desire to reclaim legal space and break down the discriminatory and oppressive silos that colonialization has built up. We heard from Rightsholders about the need for Indigenous inclusion and representation at every point in the justice system, as well as holistic approaches to justice that account for cultural programming and the roles of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Matriarchs. Alternative pathways of restoration and medicine need to replace rigid and punitive justice processes. As keynote speaker, Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould (Puglaas), concluded: “Transforming the justice system is the work of bringing down the silos between traditions, teachings, and experiences.”

As BCFNJC continues to work with First Nations across the province to remove these silos, the lessons and themes captured in the *What We Hear*

Report will inform and support the implementation of the Strategy and its tangible outcomes at the community and Nation level. BCFNJC is excited to hold the next annual First Nations Provincial Justice Forum on April 8-10th 2024 in downtown, Vancouver on the traditional lands of the Musqueam, the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. More details will be forthcoming.

Please see [this link to download the .pdf of the 2023 Provincial Justice Forum What We Heard Report.](#)

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.

Media Contact:

BC First Nations Justice Council

Natalie Martin (she/her)

Director of Communications

Email: natalie.martin@bcfnjc.com

Direct: 778-795-0582