



For Immediate Release  
March 18, 2025

**The BC First Nations Justice Council Welcomes Canada's Indigenous Justice Strategy with Optimism and Support**

*After five years of advancing the BC First Nations Justice Strategy, BC is paving the way for the rest of Canada*

**Okanagan syilx Homelands, Westbank BC:** The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) applauds the federal government's release of [Canada's first National Indigenous Justice Strategy](#) to address systemic discrimination and the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the Canadian justice system. BCFNJC welcomes the national strategy as it builds on the great work being done in BC by First Nations and the BCFNJC. The National Strategy will complement and enhance the BC First Nations Justice Strategy. BCFNJC is committed to working with Indigenous Peoples across the country in partnership to breakdown and remove all colonial barriers and advance the revitalization of First Nations legal orders.

*BCFNJC welcomes the launch of the National Indigenous Justice Strategy; the Council is impressed that the contents of the work mirrors much of what we have been working on in BC for five years – Together we are stronger. BCFNJC is excited to get this work done and action the Strategy. We call on Canada to prioritize long term sustainable funding for the Nations, communities and organizations that are leading the work and paving the way for true systemic change. We know that investment in our communities and laws will make safer communities, save money, and save lives. Continuing the status quo is not an option.*

*We are hopeful that the national strategy is another mechanism, in addition to our existing Tripartite MOU, for the federal government to advance change through bold and courageous actions. Indigenous people in Canada are suffering and enough is enough. We do not have time for anything less. This work must be Indigenous led, done in partnership and focussed on full strategy implementation.*

*BCFNJC asserts that the work of implementing this strategy must remain tied to the commitments of the federal government under the United Nations Declaration Act (UNDA) as colonial legislation remains a substantial barrier to progress. We look forward to sharing the lessons we have learned and speaking from a place of unity. We continue to work with First Nations and Indigenous communities, governments and justice partners across the country to jointly prioritize next steps based on shared principles.*

-Kory Wilson (Hemas Kla-Lee-Lee-Kla), BCFNJC Chair

The BC First Nations Justice Strategy was developed by BC First Nations and endorsed through resolutions of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and Union of BC Indian Chiefs in 2020. The Province of BC endorsed the Strategy in 2020, and Canada signed onto a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2022.

In five years, BCFNJC and partners have made remarkable progress toward critical justice system transformation. Advancements include the transition of Gladue Services from Legal Aid BC to BCFNJC, the establishment of 15 *Indigenous Justice Centres* across BC to offer culturally grounded legal services and wrap around supports for Indigenous People, the creation of a specialized Indigenous Women's Justice Plan and the piloting of a Police Accountability Unit.

#### Quick Facts:

- The BC First Nations Justice Strategy charts a path for change with 25 strategies and 42 actions along two paths: 1.) reform of the current justice system; and 2.) support First Nations in their restoration of traditional law and legal orders.
- BC is the only jurisdiction in Canada that has a formal justice strategy, led by First Nations and Indigenous communities and supported by the Province.
- In January 2021, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada was mandated with developing, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous partners, provinces and territories, an Indigenous Justice Strategy to address systemic discrimination and the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the justice system.
- In 2021, Canada, BC, and the BCFNJC executed a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding which calls for the joint implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy. The Tripartite MOU contemplates coordination on the National Indigenous Justice Strategy.
- Justice Canada provided funding to 38 Indigenous communities, organizations and governments across the country, reflecting the diversity of perspectives from First Nations, Inuit and Métis, as well as Modern Treaty and Self-Government partners, to undertake their own engagement activities with members from 2022 to 2024.
  - BCFNJC partnered with the First Nations Leadership Council to be one of the 38 Indigenous groups to lead community engagements in BC and draft an engagement report.
  - In addition to this Engagement Report, the BCFNJC submitted a further addendum to Canada for consideration in the NIJS that included further legislative changes necessary and importantly information regarding the need for core funding for the implementation of the NIJS.
- BCFNJC tracks the progress and impacts of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy in ways that honour the protocols, medicines, and truths that First Nations and Indigenous people choose to share with us. BCFNJC upholds its accountability to First Nations via the website [Tracking Justice](#).

#### About BCFNJC

The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) was created by the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs who together form the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC). BCFNJC represents BC First Nations on justice-related issues to bring about transformative change to the legal system. BCFNJC is guided by the unique and comprehensive BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy) which was jointly developed by the BC First Nations Justice Council, BC First Nations communities and the Province of British Columbia. The Strategy advances 25 individual strategies along two tracks of change: reforming the current criminal justice system and restoring Indigenous justice systems, legal traditions, and structures.

#### BC First Nations Justice Council

Today, BCFNJC is an expanding non-profit organization guided by the vision and voices of Indigenous leadership, including our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, we employ over 150 people with diverse professional, cultural, and community expertise who are working hard to implement the Justice Strategy and advance Indigenous self-determination over justice. With the direction and support of First Nations communities, work will continue to transform the mainstream colonial justice system and champion innovative, Indigenous-led justice solutions. Visit [Tracking Justice](#) for more information.

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