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Building Cultural Competency in Policing: New, Nation-Wide Training Program Created by the BC First Nations Justice Council

A formative educational experience, the training will help police to understand, reflect upon, and begin transforming their role in the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian justice system.

Okanagan syilx Homelands, Westbank BC: The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) is excited to announce the launch of a new, provincially approved [training course](#) for police. Developed in partnership with [Surrey Police Services \(SPS\)](#) and the [Canadian Police Knowledge Network \(CPKN\)](#), the course provides police with the grounding framework of knowledge, teachings, stories, and concepts needed to advance their journeys towards Indigenous cultural competency.

Working in cooperation with local First Nations communities and Elders, BCFNJC has designed the course, “Understanding Indigenous Culture for Better Professional Practice” with the recognition that cultural competency requires an ongoing, active process of learning and unlearning. The course aims to foster cultural awareness and deepen understandings of historical and ongoing realities of colonial violence and anti-Indigenous racism within policing and justice systems. These teachings are the starting point for police to challenge their biases and apply a lens to their interactions with Indigenous people that incorporates cultural humility, safety, and sensitivity – all prerequisites to cultural competency.

“Our course responds to what has been unfolding since colonial contact in Canada: too many Indigenous lives being harmed or cut short, and too many of our people incarcerated in prison, without the healing and restorative justice pathways they need” stated Kory Wilson, Chair of the BC First Nations Justice Council. “Education is a powerful tool because when we know better, we can do better. Taking this course will not automatically make you a culturally competent police officer, but it will give you the core building blocks of cultural competency – the humility, compassion, and awareness to become a safer person for the Indigenous people you serve and to repair the trust that was broken over centuries of police enforcing colonial rule.”

Informed by the gross overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system in Canada, the online immersive course advances [Strategy 20](#) of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Justice Strategy), which calls for the development of cultural competency standards and training for all those who interact with Indigenous people in the justice system, including police.

“Indigenous people have long called for a fundamental shift in policing that re-centers their self-governance, protocols, traditions, and cultures. We are grateful to our partners, SPS and CPKN, for not only walking with us to advance Strategy 20 of the Justice Strategy, but for recognizing that systemic change begins with educating police on *why* they need to do better and *how* they can do better” stated Dr. Judith Sayers, BCFNJC Director. “We are grateful to BCFNJC’s Education Team for designing the course content and powerfully weaving together teachings, stories, videos, exercises, and voices of Indigenous leaders and legal professionals. It is our hope that police take advantage of this engaging, self-reflective content and do not treat it as something to be quickly crossed off a checklist.”

Fulfilling mandatory training requirements for police in British Columbia, the course and its self-guided modules can also be completed by police across Canada, along with those working in police services, to advance their professional development and strengthen competencies related to Indigenous cultural safety, humility, and knowledge, as well as trauma-informed, culturally responsive policing approaches. Recognizing the importance of self-determination and the unique contexts and needs of First Nations communities, the course is intended to supplement any training developed by First Nations that aligns with their particular community, culture, and protocols.

“Our expectations for this course were shaped by the realization that change begins by opening the hearts and minds of police. Our training provides the much-needed space for people to get curious, to question their assumptions, and to understand the historical and ongoing role that police play in colonization” concludes Alicia Carlow, BCFNJC Acting Director of Women, 2S+, Youth, and Education. “The training is the integral piece needed to build advocacy and awareness before internal change can happen. It is there to open a door. Whether it be within days or years, we hope that those who took the course will choose to walk through this door, continuing down the road of self-reflection and action that leads to fewer deaths in custody, lower rates of incarceration, and better justice outcomes for Indigenous people.”

Individuals interested in accessing the training can do so by registering through the link: [Understanding Indigenous Culture for Better Professional Practice – Canadian Police Knowledge Network](#)

ABOUT THE 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

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Today, BCFNJC is an expanding non-profit organization guided by the vision and voices of Indigenous leadership, including our Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Our team members, who have diverse professional, cultural, and community expertise 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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