
STATEMENT

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Ministry of Children and Family Development
BC Assembly of First Nations
First Nations Summit
Union of BC Indian Chiefs

B.C. and Indigenous leaders confirm commitment to action on child welfare

OTTAWA – The Province of British Columbia, with the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs (collectively known as the First Nations Leadership Council), has released a statement following the Jan. 25-26, 2018, emergency meeting on Indigenous child welfare hosted by federal Indigenous Services Minister Jane Philpott.

“Indigenous children and families continue to be over-represented in the child-welfare system, a fact that both the Province of B.C. and Indigenous leaders are committed to changing.

“The B.C. government supports the process of First Nations exercising greater authority over the well-being of their children and families, recognizing that First Nations peoples have governed themselves since time immemorial, continue to do so today and will do so into the future. The B.C. government has fully embraced the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which recognizes First Nations peoples’ inherent right of self-government in matters relating to their local and internal affairs.

“Recognizing the mutual interest in reducing the over-representation of Indigenous children in government care, as well as the benefits of working together, the Province, the First Nations Leadership Council and the Government of Canada have signed a Reconciliation Charter, a high-level political commitment to achieve child-welfare reform. A tripartite working group is focused on addressing current policy and legislative frameworks related to First Nations children and families. It is also focused on improving relations, identifying potential governance models for First Nations communities and targeting investments in programs that support prevention, cultural connections, family reunification and First Nations’ right to self-governance.

“The recent agreement with the Wet’suwet’en Nation to explore jurisdiction for child-welfare services is another example of the collaborative approach between First Nations, B.C. and Canada to finding solutions that improve outcomes for Indigenous children, youth, families and communities.

“The Province of British Columbia also recognizes that its policies, programs and services must change to better reflect Indigenous beliefs and practices. B.C. is implementing a strategy to increase the number of Indigenous employees, and to train child-welfare staff to provide culturally relevant, meaningful and safe services for Indigenous children, youth, families and communities.

“The B.C. government and the First Nations Leadership Council will continue to work together respectfully to improve outcomes for children by understanding their past, honouring their present and supporting their future.”

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