



News Release

July 19, 2022

Williams Lake First Nation and UBCIC Call for Public Inquiry into Role of RCMP in First Nation Father's Death

(x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), S^kwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – July 19, 2022) On Sunday July 10th, 2022, a Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) father of four died after a distress call was made by his family to the police. WLFN and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) are demanding an independent investigation and public inquiry into the handling of the RCMP response to the distress call that resulted in an Indigenous man's death.

WLFN Chief Willie Sellars stated, "The family of our deceased relative made a distress call for help to the RCMP because they were concerned that he was going to hurt himself- they were not making this call to have the RCMP show up with tear gas and terrorize the entire building and our relative. We believe there should be a full public inquiry into the public safety and policing of First Nations communities in British Columbia, with a systemic focus, but in addition, a specific examination of the circumstances of this tragedy. Our families and citizens deserve to feel safe and receive supports that promote safety, reduction of risk, and protection of children."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of UBCIC, stated, "Our hearts and prayers are with the family, and especially the young children of this man. We are extremely disappointed with how police interactions with Indigenous peoples often result in tragedies like these and we are demanding immediate action and police reform." He continued, "Too often Indigenous communities are left without proper policing and public safety supports in our community to respond to the known needs of our community members when a family related incident arises. When RCMP or municipal police are involved, every incident holds the potential for escalation and needless tragedy. In the recent tragedy, the response by RCMP escalated the situation and a life was lost. It is completely unacceptable. It is more than one incident – it is a pattern that is not receiving the attention and commitment it deserves to address the systemic racism that allows for this type of behaviour to continue."

"While we know that the Independent Investigations Office BC is reviewing the incident, the state and history of police interactions with Indigenous peoples demands more," stated Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Legal Counsel. "Single accountability of one department in one city is recommended, but we are calling for an in-depth report and review on the systemic and legal failings that require immediate change and action because a second class and under-resourced public safety service has left families and individuals at risk in First Nations for too long. It is discriminatory and causes tragedy and suffering."

Enclosed: Williams Lake First Nation correspondence to Canada re. public inquiry (July 18, 2022)

Media inquiries:

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UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

For more information, please visit www.ubcic.bc.ca