



BCACCS HOPES NEW BC GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE GOOD ON PROMISES

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VANCOUVER – Territory of the *sḵwx̱wú7mesh*, *sel̓íl̓wítulh*, and *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* nations. In its first throne speech, the BC government has closely followed the promises it made during the election campaign.

The BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) acknowledges the government's commitment to the future well-being of Indigenous children and families by beginning to build partnerships with Indigenous families, communities, organizations and governments. These relationships will be indispensable to respond to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to implement the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For these, more than good intentions and promises will be required.

"After over a decade of inaction and neglect, we look forward to assisting the new government as it strives to build partnerships for change for Indigenous families, and to shed new light on Indigenous early childhood education issues," remarked Mary Teegee, BCACCS Board President.

BCACCS is eager to learn more about what the province's universal childcare program will consist of in Indigenous leadership, how Indigenous children, families, communities and those who support them will have agency within it and be supported by it, and how it relates to the \$10-a-day initiative. As contributors to the co-development of a distinct National Indigenous ELCC Framework with the Assembly of First Nations and the government of Canada, BCACCS looks forward to learning more about the Indigenous partnership opportunities that arise for Indigenous self-government in this key area of social policy.

"Building productive relationships—in what is hoped to be an era of reconciliation—requires respect for authorities on both sides, support for Indigenous capacities, and a commitment to a sustainable path of cultural vitality by way of self-determination," said Mary Teegee, BCACCS Board President. "Without the empowerment of Indigenous organizations and governments in matters that go beyond program and service delivery, Indigenous peoples will continue to be fundamentally sidelined, and reconciliation will remain a dishonourable window-dressing."

As fall draws nearer, BCACCS looks forward to seeing a separate Indigenous approach to Indigenous ELCC in BC from the government, developed in partnership and built upon engagement processes like the one BCACCS convened earlier this year as a part of the National ELCC process. As we have seen more broadly in darker chapters of the past, a singular focus on mainstream ELCC marginalises Indigenous ELCC and the cultures (and languages) it would protect, revitalize and durably support. Because of this, the challenges faced are not solely programmatic, they are also cultural, moral, and legal; they are deeply embedded within the continuing challenges to mainstream care and education arising from a great diversity of Indigenous traditions, as well as from our shared responsibilities to historical trauma and ongoing Indigenous

marginalization, inequity and dispossession. Leadership for these challenges must come from within communities and nations, rather than be visited upon them.

Indigenous families and communities have been raising their children in these territories for hundreds of generations. More recently, forty years of research has shown the long-term benefits of high quality early learning and child care programs, especially for ‘vulnerable’ children and families. Success in bringing these together requires the commitment of governments and leadership to empower Indigenous peoples to restore their own authority for their families, children, and communities’ futures, and to provide the capacities to do so (per UNDRIP A. 39).

The BC Government has indicated a good direction as a start, and there is reason to be hopeful. Success however will be realized only in the specifics of working together with a new vision—an Indigenous one—and a resolve sufficient to carry us through the challenges ahead.

Since the late nineteenth century, where governments are concerned, Indigenous people in these territories have been waiting. Still the question lies before us: Is this finally the government to do things differently?

More info about BCACCS:

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) is committed to nurturing excellence through community outreach, education, research, and advocacy to ensure every Aboriginal child in BC has access to spiritually enriching, culturally relevant, high quality early childhood development and care services.

Link to BCACCS [website](#)

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