



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

National Indian Brotherhood

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**4TH ANNUAL REGIONAL CHIEFS' SPECIAL ASSEMBLY
RESOLUTION 21/2008
FEBRUARY 15, 2008, VANCOUVER, BC**

**SUBJECT: "WALKING TOGETHER TO KEEP INDIGENOUS CHILDREN
AT THE CENTRE" DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT**

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

DECISION:

WHEREAS:

- A. By Resolution #17/2007, Chiefs directed the Regional Chief to pursue a province wide assembly to discuss the development of a strategy to address First Nations jurisdiction over First Nations Children, Families and Communities;
- B. By UBCIC Resolution #2007-52, and First Nations Summit Resolution #0907.15, the Chiefs directed the two executives to convene a "First Nations Child at the Centre Chiefs' Forum" to bring together Chiefs/leaders, along with key political and technical partners, to review, discuss and finalize a *First Nations Child at the Centre Action Plan*, which will set out a vision, principles, key topics and actions assisting First Nations to address and advance issues related to children and families; and, that the Forum follow the same format as previous First Nations Leadership Council forums (i.e. information sharing, review and discussion of "Discussion Paper" prepared in advance, and finalization of Discussion Paper into an Action Plan). Additionally, the UBCIC Resolution resolved that the UBCIC Social Development Committee provided further direction to ensure that Early Childhood Development is a priority agenda item for the First Nations Chiefs Forum;
- C. An "Indigenous Child at the Centre" Chiefs' Forum was hosted by the BCAFN, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and First Nations Summit on January 23-25th, 2008, in Vancouver, BC. The Forum followed the same format as other FNLC hosted forums. A draft Discussion Paper was presented to the delegates and significant feedback was provided throughout the Forum discussions, as well as through written feedback during a breakout session, evaluations forms, and written submissions. The draft Discussion Paper and Action Plan Framework will be revised to reflect this feedback.

D. Other outcomes of the Forum include:

- An MOU with the Representative for Children and Youth (as mandated by the Chiefs by UBCIC Resolution # 2007-56 and First Nations Summit Resolution #0907.14)
- Support for the “Walking Together to Keep Indigenous Children at the Centre” Declaration of Commitment,
- A Proceedings Report,
- Extensive sharing of information and perspectives to educate and inform the Chiefs/leaders of issues related to children and families,
- Significant feedback to inform the ongoing development of the Action Plan,
- Significant feedback through evaluation forms to assist in planning a second follow-up forum, and
- General consensus that this dialogue was long overdue and the discussion must continue, with corresponding action.

E. The “Walking Together to Keep Indigenous Children at the Centre” Declaration of Commitment (attached) arose during the course of discussion at the Forum and represents commitments to:

- Maintain and uphold the provisions set out in the Declaration, including protecting and supporting our Indigenous children.
- A coordinated social justice framework that promotes a holistic approach to resolving the systemic disadvantages experienced by Indigenous children in British Columbia.
- Create an Indigenous Child at the Centre Caucus to assist Indigenous Nations in the development, finalization and implementation of an “Indigenous Child at the Centre Action Plan” and to work to coordinate and facilitate dialogue through regional and provincial forums.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Chiefs in Assembly endorse the attached “Walking Together to Keep Indigenous Children at the Centre” Declaration of Commitment; and
2. The Chiefs in Assembly direct the Regional Chief, working with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit, to work with First Nations to:
 - a. establish the Indigenous Child at the Centre Caucus to assist Indigenous Nations in the development, finalization and implementation of an *Indigenous Child at the Centre Action Plan*, and to work to coordinate and facilitate dialogue through regional and provincial forums; and
 - b. pursue a second province wide “First Nations Child at the Centre Chiefs’ Forum” to bring together Chiefs/leaders, along with key political and technical partners, to continue work on the development and finalization of the *Indigenous Child at the Centre Action Plan*, which will set out a vision, principles, key topics and actions assisting First Nations to address and advance issues related to children and families as well as First Nations jurisdiction and responsibility for the well-being of First Nations children, families and communities.



"WALKING TOGETHER TO KEEP INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE" DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

The spirituality and cultural identity of a child must come first and foremost and serve as the principle that firmly grounds us as we undertake this work. As leaders, we commit to always put the spiritual, cultural and emotional well-being of our children at the very heart of all of our discussions. We commit to putting aside our political differences in light of this principle that must lead all of our affairs.

On January 25th, 2008 the Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia convened an "Indigenous Child at the Centre" Forum.

We, the Indigenous peoples of British Columbia, commit to exercise our inherent right and welcome the responsibility for the survival, dignity and well-being of our children. We have a deep relationship with our lands, and unique spirituality, cultures, languages, and systems of governance which together provide for the holistic well-being of our children. We make this solemn Declaration out of our commitment to be unified in affirming our Aboriginal Title and Rights, and our self-determination and jurisdiction, as they relate to our children and families, and to support each other in improving the lives of our children and families.

As the original Peoples to this land now known as British Columbia, and in accordance with provisions of the *All Our Relations Declaration*, *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, *the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and other international standards aimed at ensuring the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous children and families, we declare:

- We have the inalienable sovereign right of self-determination. By virtue of this right, we are free to determine our political status and free to pursue our economic, social, health and well-being, and cultural development.
- We are connected to our lands and territories and have diverse cultures, founded on the ways of life, traditions and values of our ancestors, which include systems of governance, law and social organization.
- We have collective, sovereign and inherent authorities and jurisdictions over our children and families.
- We recognize and respect each other's commitment to our common responsibility for the well-being of our children.
- Cooperation, collaboration and mutual support is essential in making a measurable improvement in the lives of our children and families.
- Bringing our children home, and addressing the needs of our children and families, requires a holistic approach to addressing the full range of issues that impact our communities, including education, health, child care, housing, economic development, justice, and recreation.



Therefore we commit to:

- Maintain and uphold the provisions set out in this Declaration, including protecting and supporting our Indigenous children.
- A coordinated social justice framework that promotes a holistic approach to resolving the systemic disadvantages experienced by Indigenous children in British Columbia.
- Create an Indigenous Child at the Centre Caucus to assist Indigenous Nations in the development, finalization and implementation of an “Indigenous Child at the Centre Action Plan” and to work to coordinate and facilitate dialogue through regional and provincial forums.

Supported by Indigenous leaders on January 25th, 2008

