



For Immediate Release  
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## **“We’re Coming for Everything Our Ancestors Were Denied”: BCFNJC Releases What We Heard Report and Accredited CPD Content from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual First Nations Justice Forum**

*What We Heard Report and Continuing Professional Development videos capture the insights of Rightsholders and will strengthen the learning that is integral for justice system transformation*

**syilx Homelands, Westbank BC:** The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) is pleased to share the *What We Heard Report* from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual First Nations Justice Forum (Justice Forum), along with video lectures from the event that legal professionals may use to fulfill the Law Society of British Columbia’s accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements.

The *What We Heard Report* provides a summary of the proceedings and findings from the Justice Forum, which took place April 8-10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 on the Homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh (Vancouver). First Nations leaders, Elders, justice partners, and community members came together in the spirit and theme of “*collaboration*” to hold up and advance the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy). Rightsholders shared insights on justice issues related to the Strategy, discussed community justice priorities, and were updated on the Strategy’s progress.

Plenary presentations also allowed attendees to hear from panels of First Nations leaders, subject matter experts, and government partners on relevant justice topics – from policing and diversion to First Nations laws in child protection and tripartite collaboration with provincial and federal governments. These plenary sessions were filmed and are now available as accredited CPD video lectures.

“The *What We Heard Report* honours and weaves together the [voices, stories, and insights](#) shared by Rightsholders into a powerful tool that will teach, inspire, and guide,” stated Amanda Carling, CEO of BCFNJC. “The report will not only inform ongoing justice work but will be used alongside our [CPD video lectures](#) to call in lawyers and legal professionals so they can truly understand what the BC First Nations Justice Strategy is about. Improving the justice outcomes for Indigenous people requires the support of *everyone*, and it is BCFNJC’s hope that both the public and those working in the justice system can meaningfully engage with our content and learn from the teachings generously shared by Rightsholders at the Justice Forum.”

The Justice Forum was filled with tailored workshops and breakout sessions focused on gathering community insights on specific areas of work under the Strategy, including the [Indigenous Women’s Justice Plan](#), diversion and [community-based justice programming](#), public legal education, and much more. Key themes from these discussions have been captured in the *What We Heard Report*.

“Over half of the forum attendees were community members and BCFNJC is proud that the *What We Heard Report* reflects their wisdom, gifts, and what they envision for their Nations and people. Their voices echoed loudly and resolutely as they shared that *trust* is key for justice reform. We must earn their trust and trust in their processes, systems, and laws,” stated Kory Wilson, BCFNJC Chair. “As Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President shared in his opening remarks, ‘We’re coming for everything our Ancestors were denied.’ Rightsholders are making their Ancestors proud as they rectify past injustices. It is our duty to work with and trust in them. We can start by learning from their stories and experiences centered in the *What We Hear Report*.”

“An undeniable truth that echoed throughout the Forum is the profound need for courage. It takes institutional courage for people to demonstrate empathy, to show they care, to listen to the stories, and to help get people in need the resources and supports. This courage is what is needed for our communities.” stated Boyd Peters, BCFNJC Vice-Chair. “BCNFJC will continue working with First Nations communities and Indigenous people across BC to empower those working within the justice system, including law

enforcement officials, legal practitioners, and members of the judiciary, to confidently take a proactive stance and embody this courage.”

The Justice Forum was made possible due to the continued leadership and support of the 200+ First Nations in BC, as well as the commitment and generosity of the Law Foundation of BC who was the primary funder of the Justice Forum. Planning is underway for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Justice Forum which is set to take place in fall 2025.

Read the What We Heard Report [here](#).

Hear stories shared during the 3rd Annual Justice Forum [here](#).

Watch the CPD Accredited Video Lectures [here](#).

-30-

### **ABOUT THE BCFNJC**

The BC First Nations Justice Council has been entrusted with the mandate to transform the justice system and create better outcomes for Indigenous people through implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy.

The strategy, signed March 06, 2020, was jointly developed by the BC First Nations Justice Council, BC First Nations communities and the Province of British Columbia. It includes 43 actions along two paths which involve the reformation of the current system as well as the restoration of First Nations' legal traditions and structures.

#### **Media Contact:**

#### **BC First Nations Justice Council**

Natalie Martin (she/her)

Director of Communications

Email: [natalie.martin@bcfnjc.com](mailto:natalie.martin@bcfnjc.com)

Direct: 778-795-0582

### **BC First Nations Justice Council**

303-1979 Old Okanagan Hwy, Westbank, BC. V4T 3A4 Office: 778-940-1520  
[bcfnjc.com](http://bcfnjc.com)