



NORTHERN SHUSWAP TRIBAL COUNCIL

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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

Northern Secwepemc te Qelmu cw (NStQ) Encouraged with Federal Budget and its Commitment to increased funding for First Nations Self-government and Indigenous services.

(February 28, 2018) WILLIAMS LAKE, B.C. [Secwepemculew] – "As the prime minister has said many times, when it comes to renewing the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples, we have a responsibility to do better and to do more," said Finance Minister Bill Morneau in his speech to the House of Commons. From the perspective of Northern Secwepemc te Qelmu cw (NStQ) leaders, Mr. Morneau's comment is a huge understatement. Perhaps it is finally time for Canada's First Nations to see real, significant and positive change in the way Indigenous peoples are respected, viewed and treated within the fabric of Canadian society.

"This budget is a reflection of what First Nations have been saying for several years; that FN's have not received equal funding for services provided, in comparison to the general society and provincial funding." says Ann Louie, Northern Shuswap Tribal Council Board of Directors Treasurer and Williams Lake Band chief. "This is a very positive step towards reconciliation, especially in the area of Treaty negotiations where we will no longer have to take out loans to negotiate what was rightfully ours in the beginning. Hopefully these measures are implemented immediately, so that we do not have to continually go to court to prove our overall rights."

The federal budget commits new dollars to allow First Nations to move beyond the Indian Act while continuing investments aimed at closing spending gaps in areas long seen as irritants in the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. Under a chapter titled 'Reconciliation', the 2018 budget earmarks new funding for Indigenous child welfare, health care, water and housing, alongside new funding arrangements and cash for self-government and modern-day treaty negotiations.

Canada is also planning to end its use of loan funding for First Nations negotiating modern treaties, which the NStQ see as a tremendously positive step forward, having been engaged with the tripartite BC Treaty Process for almost 30 years. Negotiations have often generated substantial debts for First Nations, compelling them to borrow from government to pay negotiators. Ottawa will now provide such funding through non-repayable contribution agreements.

"The NStQ fully supports Canada in its steps to move towards a rights recognition approach. A big part of this change in direction will be the much needed changes to our fiscal relationship with Canada", says Patrick Harry, Northern Shuswap Tribal Council Board of Directors Spokesperson and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation chief. "NStQ fully supports these steps to replace the current use of loan funding with non-repayable contribution funding. These changes

will assist NStQ with its ultimate goal of reaching, and thriving under, an NStQ government. The Northern Shuswap plan on meeting with Minister Carolyn Bennett over the next week in our territory and these changes will definitely be on our Agenda.”

In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal determined that Ottawa discriminated against FN’s children by underfunding child welfare services and ordered Ottawa to increase funding and overhaul the system. The new funding announced in the 2018 budget brings total investment in Indigenous child welfare services — including base funding and dollars announced in 2016 — to about \$6.67 billion over the next five years. The budget also provides about \$101.5 million over the next five years for First Nations to create their own governance structures outside of Indian Act rules, which have been long criticized as restrictive and paternalistic.

“While the tribunal ordering the Federal Government to increase funding for child & welfare services is seen a positive move forward, we also require the resources to support moving this forward in BC, utilizing First Nations’ preferred Holistic approach. We want jurisdiction over our children, which is a big piece of Self Government”, stated Mike Archie, Northern Shuswap Tribal Council Board of Directors Vice-Chair and Canim Lake Band chief. “It is of the utmost importance that we take our rightful place in society, by meeting the needs of our community now and in future, without the constraints of the Indian Act.”

The NStQ looks forward to working with the government of Canada with a renewed sense of optimism, and the hope that the British Columbia government also immediately moves forward with its commitment to improving efficiencies within the tripartite treaty negotiations process.

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The Northern Shuswap Tribal Council is a non-governing body which represents 4 of the 17 communities known as the Secwepemc Nation, working on behalf of these four Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw member communities of: Williams Lake Indian Band (T'exelc), Soda Creek Indian Band (Xats'ull), Canim Lake Indian Band (Tsq'escen') and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe Creek / Dog Creek First Nation).