

Statement for Immediate release  
11 February 2018

## STATEMENT FROM THE BC ABORIGINAL JUSTICE COUNCIL ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN CANADA IN RESPONSE TO THE VERDICT IN THE MURDER TRIAL OF GERALD STANLEY

**Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, BC** – The BC Aboriginal Justice Council (BCAJC) is gravely concerned upon learning of the not guilty verdict in the high-profile trial of Gerald Stanley for the second-degree murder of Colten Boushie, a 22-year-old Indigenous man from Red Pheasant Cree Nation in Saskatchewan. Mr. Boushie was killed on Mr. Stanley’s farm near Biggar, Saskatchewan in the summer of 2016, when a bullet from Mr. Stanley’s handgun was shot through Mr. Boushie’s head and neck. Mr. Stanley was found by a jury to be not guilty of second-degree murder or, in the alternative, manslaughter. The problems this trial exposed in terms of criminal justice procedures and fairness are significant and warrant further attention.

“Our hearts and prayers are with Colten Boushie’s family and community. We are resolute – we stand shoulder to shoulder with our relations across Canada and will work to ensure that this grave injustice is acknowledged. We will bolster our efforts, both here in British Columbia and across the country, to drive real and fundamental change to Canada’s criminal justice system,” said Doug White, BCAJC Co-Chair (Criminal Justice)

“We thank the Attorney General and Prime Minister of Canada for offering words of comfort to the family of Mr. Boushie and the community. We thank them for offering a spirit of repair and their openness to listen to Indigenous peoples so that our confidence in the justice system can be restored through meaningful dialogue and improvement,” White continued.

“The verdict in this trial needs to awaken the conscience of all Canadians. The trial began with a jury selection process that reportedly excluded all potential Indigenous jurors by peremptory challenges. The reality of this verdict drags Canada’s justice system out from behind the window dressing of reconciliation rhetoric and exposes real problems that we must urgently address together. Indigenous people across this country – particularly young men like Mr. Boushie – are massively overrepresented in Canadian jails. The verdict makes clear that there are two systems of justice in this country – one system that sends a disproportionate number of Indigenous people to jail and another that sends people like Gerald Stanley home to his family and community under police escort and protection. This cannot continue. Today, Canadians across the country are doubting whether this system, that clearly discounts the lives of Indigenous peoples, has anything at all to do with justice,” White concluded.

The BC Aboriginal Justice Council has committed to working with the BC government to review and reform the justice system in BC. The Council members applaud those who recognize the system must change immediately and implore the federal and provincial governments, and all British Columbians and Canadians, to rise together in this moment. We need to create a new criminal justice system that is fair, inclusive and just.

# BC ABORIGINAL JUSTICE COUNCIL



NATIVE COURTWORKER  
ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ASSEMBLY OF  
FIRST NATIONS



FIRST  
NATIONS  
SUMMIT



UNION OF  
BRITISH COLUMBIA  
INDIAN CHIEFS

The BC Aboriginal Justice Council recommends the Attorney General of Canada establish an immediate Indigenous Justice Action Committee at the National level led by distinguished Indigenous lawyers and judges, as well as other experts in the relationship of Indigenous peoples and the justice system, to provide strategic advice to the Attorney General on how to ensure that Canada's legal system, including trial courts, are reflective of a justice system based on respect for human rights and fairness, and the principles of anti-discrimination. The BC Aboriginal Justice Council offers our assistance and support in this important initiative.

For further information, please contact:

Alyssa Melnyk, on behalf of the BC Aboriginal Justice Council  
[amelnyk@castlemain.com](mailto:amelnyk@castlemain.com) or (604) 562-7990