BC FIRST NATIONS JUSTICE COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Nations Justice Council Pleased to Host Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould, PC, QC, MP at First Nations Provincial Justice Forum

(Snuneymuxw Territory: Nanaimo, BC – April 9, 2019) – A gathering of First Nations leaders from across British Columbia will be meeting in Richmond for two intensive days of deliberation on the development of a strategy to transform the relationship of First Nations peoples with the criminal justice system.

Hosted by the First Nations Justice Council, with support from the government of British Columbia, the event on April 24 and 25 aims to develop concrete guidance from First Nations leaders about how to address urgent issues regarding the justice system including overrepresentation of First Nations peoples incarcerated, access to justice, and systemic racism.

"The crisis of overrepresentation and associated challenges across the criminal justice system are long-standing and long-recognized. We have an urgent mandate and imperative to act. The political will and understanding of the necessity to achieve transformative shifts is shared and urgent. In recent years, Canadians have increasingly witnessed how broken the relationship is between Indigenous peoples and the criminal justice system from sharp moments like the Colten Boushie trial and verdict and the ever-growing incarceration of Indigenous peoples in Canadian jails, which now stands at 28% of the prison population overall. The BC government has committed to co-develop a strategy to make real change, and this forum is central to moving that strategy forward," said Doug White, Chair of the BC First Nations Justice Council.

The two-day Forum will include a review of the history of the relationship between First Nations peoples and the justice system, and intensive dialogue on issues related to policing, corrections, the court system, restorative justice, access to justice, and prosecutorial and sentencing practices. A major focus will be placed on the role of self-determination and self-government and the roles for First Nations laws, governments, and jurisdictions in transforming the criminal justice system.

The keynote presentation - 'From Denial to Recognition: the Challenges of Indigenous Justice in Canada" - will be delivered on Apr. 24th at 1:00pm by the Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, PC, QC, MP the Member of Parliament for Vancouver-Granville who recently served as the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of Canada, and was the first Indigenous person to hold that position. In addition to her presentation, Ms. Wilson-Raybould will be honoured for her historic and on-going work and leadership on behalf of Indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

Opening remarks for the Justice Forum will be delivered between 9:30am and 10:15am on Apr. 24th by Regional Chief Terry Teegee of the BC Assembly of First Nations, Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit, Hon. David Eby, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of British Columbia, Hon. Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General of British Columbia, and Doug White, Chair of the BC First Nations Justice Council.

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