



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ACRD shows support to Nuu-chah-nulth nations in their State of Emergency declaration**

ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT – At its regular board meeting on September 25, the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) Board of Directors unanimously voted to stand in solidarity and provide support to the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council in their declaration of a State of Emergency in response to the opioid/toxic drug and mental health crisis. The ACRD acknowledges the urgency of this crisis and believes a collaborative approach is important.

On September 19, 2024, the 14 Nuu-chah-nulth Nations on the west coast of Vancouver Island, with support from the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC), called a state of emergency regarding the opioid/toxic drug crisis and mental health. Their letter to top decision makers said, “We as Nuu-chah-nulth have lost far too many people to underlying trauma, alcoholism, addiction, mental health issues, and toxic drugs, and we are saying, ‘NO MORE’.”

Port Alberni ranks second for drug deaths, with only Vancouver’s Downtown East Side ahead of them. Although First Nations only make up approximately four per cent of B.C.’s population, they account for close to 20 per cent of toxic drug deaths. Vice-chair Debbie Haggard says these statistics cannot be ignored and asked that the ACRD Board of Directors offer their support to the Nuu-chah-nulth nations.

“This is a crisis that touches all of our lives, but First nations communities are affected almost six times the rate of other communities when it comes to the mental health and opioid crisis.” says Vice-chair Haggard. “Our neighbouring nations have already lost so much. We all have a role to play in finding a solution. It’s important that we show our solidarity on this.”

NTC is not looking for money, just a solution-based plan, according to ACRD Chair John Jack, who represented Huu-ay-aht First Nations as elected Chief Councillor at the NTC press conference on this matter.

“The NTC chiefs want to see resources for the creation of plans, not just for toxic drugs and opioids but also for mental health,” explains Chair Jack. “NTC wants a holistic approach towards prevention and treatment, which includes all of these things.”

The Nations appeal for more investment in mental health, education, housing, and economic development that can “create a future where fewer people turn to opioids to cope with trauma and pain.” The ACRD Board of Directors will issue a letter of support to the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations. For more information on the state of emergency, go to [News | Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council \(nuuchahnulth.org\)](https://www.nuuchahnulth.org).

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