

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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May 17, 2016

**Declaration to the Office of the Auditor General from the Executive of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs:
No response received from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett to Letters Calling for Specific
Claims Research Funding Restoration**

I write to declare that we have received no written response to or acknowledgement of multiple letters sent by the UBCIC Executive over a period of six (6) months from November 2015 to May 2016 to Minister Bennett urging the immediate restoration of specific claims research funding. These letters articulated the dire state of claims research in light of massive funding cuts in 2014 and the impacts of these cuts on First Nations' ability to access justice and Canada's responsibility to fulfill its lawful obligations and uphold the Honour of the Crown.

Our efforts were supported by over 100 Indigenous organizations representing several hundred First Nations across Canada.

On February 13, 2016, the UBCIC Executive met with Minister Bennett to begin our working relationship and provide her with an overview of our organization's priorities as well as jointly commit to further discussions regarding our future work. At this meeting Minister Bennett committed to restore funding for Specific Claims Research and development to Claims Research Units (CRUs) and First Nations for the research and development of specific claims and to jointly work towards meaningful reform of the specific claims process. CRUs believed their budget requests would be fulfilled. UBCIC summarized the meeting and promises in a letter to Minister Bennett dated February 16th, 2016.

Despite this promise and despite campaign promises from the Trudeau government to take "serious, concrete actions to demonstrate its commitment to recognizing, respecting, and fulfilling its obligations and commitments to First Nations," to date, we have not received a single response to our now collective, nationwide calls for funding restoration.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President

Chief Robert Chamberlin
Vice-President

кукри / жууу виисон
Secretary-Treasurer