

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

FOUNDING HEAD OFFICE
209 - 345 Chief Alex Thomas Way
Kamloops, B.C. V2H 1H1
Tel: 250-828-9746
Fax: 250-828-0319



VANCOUVER OFFICE
5th Floor, 342 Water Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1B6
Tel: 604-684-0231
Fax: 604-684-5726
1-800-793-9701
Email: ubcic@ubcic.bc.ca
Web: www.ubcic.bc.ca

November 24, 2015

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
10 Wellington Street
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H4

RE: Immediate Restoration of Specific Claims Research Funding for 2016 – 2017 Fiscal Year

Dear Minister Bennett:

We write to follow up on our November 4, 2015 letter and briefing note regarding the fair, just and timely resolution of specific claims. In that letter we recommend taking concrete measures to demonstrate the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation through resolving specific claims and to carry out this work in partnership with First Nations. The most pressing of these recommendations is the immediate restoration of specific claims research funding to claims research units (CRUs) and First Nations.

In February 2014, CRUs and First Nations across Canada received 30-60% cuts to research funding as part of the Harper Government's Deficit Reduction Action Plan. These dramatic funding cuts have placed significant burdens on CRUs and First Nations seeking justice and redress for Canada's unresolved lawful obligations. Since the funding cuts were implemented, CRUs have had to significantly reduce projected deliverables, halt work on new claims and scale back or suspend work on claims near completion. At the same time, CRUs and First Nations must bear the considerable burden of preparing claims to meet the 'Minimum Standard,' a set of stringently applied technical guidelines that must be met in order for claims to be accepted by Canada.

Indigenous communities in Canada have been waiting for decades, many for over a century to obtain justice for these historical grievances. The funding cuts amount to yet another obstacle and more delay. Frustration grows at the apparent reluctance of the federal government to take these grievances seriously and honour its commitment to resolve them in a timely and just way.

All CRUs and First Nations seeking annual specific claims research funding must submit proposals for the 2016-2017 fiscal year by January 15, 2016. Proposals are substantial undertakings and require considerable planning. To facilitate this process we urge you to communicate your intentions to restore specific claims funding to previous levels well in advance of the proposal deadline so that we may inform the Indigenous communities for whom we conduct research what they may expect regarding progress on their claims and so that we may plan accordingly.

The new Liberal Government has indicated that engaging in the process of meaningful reconciliation requires at the very least that Canada fulfills its past promises as a concrete demonstration of good faith and the honour of the Crown. Immediate restoration of research funding will demonstrate clearly the seriousness of your government's commitment to justice for First Nations in Canada.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Chief Robert Chamberlin
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC:

Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
Chief Maureen Chapman, Chair, BC Specific Claims Working Group
Union of BC Indian Chiefs Council
National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations
AFN Chiefs Committee on Claims
BC Assembly of First Nations
First Nations Summit