

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
401 - 312 Main Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6A 2T2
Tel: 604-684-0231
Fax: 604-684-5726
1-800-793-9701
Email: ubcic@ubcic.bc.ca
Web: www.ubcic.bc.ca

February 12, 2019

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister, Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
Via fax: 613-992-4211
Via email: pm@pm.gc.ca

OPEN LETTER: The discriminatory, sexist comments about Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould being spread by government officials and staff are appalling and condemnable

Dear Prime Minister Justin Trudeau,

We demand that you immediately and categorically publicly condemn the racist and sexist innuendo about Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould that is being spread by unnamed elected officials and staff of your government in media reports.

Statements from senior staffers and officials perpetuate a damaging and sexist image of Minister Wilson-Raybould as someone who was “a thorn in the side of cabinet,” “difficult to get along with,” and “known to berate fellow cabinet members at the table.” It has been reported by insiders of your government that she was someone “who others felt they had trouble trusting” and has reportedly “been in it for herself” such that “everything is very Jody-centric.”

These disingenuous statements are cowardly, low blows aimed at discrediting the staunch work ethic Minister Wilson-Raybould has maintained. They perpetuate colonial-era, sexist stereotypes that Indigenous women cannot be powerful, forthright, and steadfast in positions of power, but rather confrontational, meddling and egotistic. These comments from your staff must be recognized for what they are – blatant sexism.

We applaud and acknowledge Liberal MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes who has issued a statement that precisely captures the sexist agenda being carried out against Minister Wilson-Raybould: “As someone on the inside who knows (Wilson-Raybould), I can tell you she is fierce, smart and

unapologetic. When women speak up and out, they are always going to be labelled. Go ahead. Label away.”

Hopefully, Canadians will also see the negative conduct and discriminatory rhetoric for what it is: an attempt to save face and initiate damage control about the purported wrongdoings of your office by attacking and discrediting a prominent Indigenous woman and leader. This is not the first time you and your government has conducted itself in a disapprobative and inappropriate manner. Kukpi7 Judy Wilson still awaits your apology, as requested by the UBCIC Executive in December 2018, after your dismissive and patronizing conduct and comments towards her at the Assembly of First Nations meeting in Ottawa.

We urge you to take responsibility for your behavior and that of your government. If you do not condemn these harmful statements and apologize to Minister Wilson-Raybould, you not only reaffirm a colonial belief system that Indigenous women are inferior and disposable, but the hypocrisy of your professed feminism and “most important relationship” with Indigenous people will be laid bare for all Canadians to see.

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: Federal Cabinet Ministers, Canada
Assembly of First Nations
First Nations Summit Task Group
Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations
Union of BC Indian Chiefs