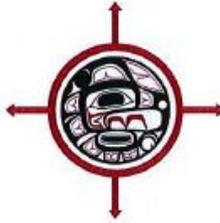


OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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News Release

April 20, 2020

UBCIC Calls for Emergency Interjurisdictional Meeting to Address Housing the Homeless during COVID-19 Crisis

(xwmeθkwəy' əm (Musqueam), skwχ wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlR ilwətaʔ/səlR ílwitulh (TsleilWaututh)/Vancouver, BC. – April 20, 2020) The day after a group of homeless advocates and their supporters temporarily occupied a portion of an elementary school in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is calling for swift action from governments and agencies to house the homeless during COVID-19 and beyond.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the UBCIC, stated "We are living in an unprecedented and absolutely life-changing pandemic where we are being told every hour of every day to be physically distant, stay home, and wash our hands to stop the spread of COVID-19. Without a doubt, these actions are impossible for most of our homeless population, which is disproportionately Indigenous. We call for an emergency meeting between Minister Shane Simpson's newly formed cross-ministerial team on the DTES, Mayor Kennedy Stewart, BC Housing, and Vancouver-East MP Jenny Kwan, and ask that they proactively and immediately house the homeless in Vancouver with a focus on the densely populated DTES. We cannot wait for people to get sick before finding them housing if we are trying to stop the spread of COVID-19. Finding safe and secure housing for the homeless population will allow people to maintain physical distance and the best sanitation practices, drastically reducing the potential for an outbreak in the DTES. The next task is to create a transition plan into permanent housing for the homeless population. While we are aware of the enormity of this task, it is imperative."

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Media inquiries: Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of UBCIC: (250-490-5314)

UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.