

David Dennis. Nomination Statement. February 1, 2017.

My name is Dave Dennis and I am running for the position of Vice President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. It is important for me to recognize the many members past and present of this, our longest running organization and their efforts to protect and advance our rights as indigenous peoples.

My roots in UBCIC go back to the beginning. My grandfather, Arthur Peters, was the Chief of what was then known as the Ohiaht Indian Band, and was a founding member of the Union. Many of you may remember my father Clarence Dennis ("CD") who worked for the Union in the early days exposing the death in custody of Fred Quilt that eventually led to the first Coroner's Inquest of such circumstances. My contribution to the organization began as a member of the Native Youth Movement, which had membership status in the 90's. We worked together with grassroots advocates and other organizations to successfully pressure the government into calling a public inquiry into the death in custody of Frank Paul.

I have always had a deep commitment to our political struggle and the the safety and well being of our members. With the looming spectre of pipeline expansion and the wholesale endorsement of powerful governments and business interests, conflict is almost inevitable. We, as Native people, acting on our ancient responsibilities must be prepared, organized and well disciplined for what may come. I feel a special obligation to work towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Frank Paul Inquiry, which is work that I personally feel that I have left undone.


At the same time we must never forget to celebrate our many positive achievements as our young people enter a new post-residential school era, with new vitality and bold ideas to meet challenges and burdens. We must embrace their view that the state of being "colonized" is a mental health condition that needs to be addressed in our time. Much as we see many of our non-Native allies confront their own mental health condition: Racism.

Chiefs, this is an incredibly important time for the future of our communities. As many threats there are to our lands and peoples, there are opportunities for healing and growth. In the spirit of these ideas I am putting my name forward for your consideration.

Like many of you, I am not a stranger to overcoming obstacles. Even recently I suffered a serious concussion when intervening to stop a physical domestic dispute, and have struggled toward full recovery. The concussion reminded me that there are often costs to bear when challenging the fallout from the past. I am looking forward to devoting my full energy and creativity to assisting UBCIC to overcome the obstacles and challenges that we all share.

To all of those running for consideration for all the positions I wish you the best of luck and offer my solidarity, regardless of the outcome.

Sincerely

  
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