

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

October 13, 2020

Doug Caul
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Indigenous Relations
and Reconciliation
West Annex Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Via Email Only: Doug.Caul@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Terrasses de la Chaudière 10 Wellington North
Tower Gatineau QC K1A 0H4
Via Email Only: minister@aadnc-aandc.gc.ca

The Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Indigenous Services Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Via Email Only: Marc.Miller@parl.gc.ca

Don Wright
Deputy Minister to the Premier & Cabinet
Secretary
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Via Email Only: Don.J.Wright@gov.bc.ca

RE: UBCIC Resolution 2020-17 “Addressing Priority Concerns and Needs of BC First Nations Around COVID-19”

Dear Minister Bennett, Minister Miller, Deputy Minister Wright and Deputy Minister Caul:

We are writing with respect to Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) Resolution 2020-17 “Addressing Priority Concerns and Needs of BC First Nations Around COVID-19,” which was presented, affirmed and endorsed by consensus at the UBCIC Annual General Assembly on September 29, 2020 (enclosed).

By Resolution 2020-17, the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly recognize the persistent challenges First Nations face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and endorse UBCIC’s Report: “Concerns Expressed by the UBCIC Membership in Relation to COVID-19, & Requests for Advocacy and Recommendations for Policy Reforms” (enclosed). This report was a result of a month-long data-gathering initiative in which UBCIC members provided extensive testimonial data attesting to the substantial social and economic impacts of the pandemic upon their communities. Collating their feedback and perspectives, the report identified a list of recommendations from First Nations for creating a more coordinated and effective approach to aiding Nations as the pandemic continues.

In accordance with Resolution 2020-17, we present UBCIC’s membership feedback report and recommendations on COVID-19 for your review as a critical document that should guide the federal and

provincial governments' efforts to remedy the social injustice and economic insecurity First Nations are experiencing. We urge you to immediately review and carry out the report's advocacy and action points around improved government communications, ending racial discrimination, funding increases, respecting Aboriginal Title and Rights, and fulfilling requests for administrative and/or service support.

We look forward to your response and action on this, and request a meeting with both of your governments to follow up directly on the recommendations in the UBCIC report.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Chief Don Tom
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: UBCIC Chiefs Council

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UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS
52ND ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SEPTEMBER 29TH TO 30TH, 2020
VIRTUAL MEETING

Resolution no. 2020-17

RE: Addressing Priority Concerns and Needs of BC First Nations Around COVID-19

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have far-reaching and disproportionate impacts on Indigenous communities in BC, creating new intersecting challenges and intensifying pre-existing barriers to Indigenous wellbeing, including those related to healthcare, substance abuse, employment, housing, justice, and gendered violence;

WHEREAS due to the unprecedented scale of challenges to Indigenous welfare that the pandemic has introduced, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs' (UBCIC) assumed an active and multidisciplinary role as a participant, intermediary, and advocate in the Province's response to the public health crisis, and continues to advance, in close partnership with the BC Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and UBCIC membership, priority issues and interests on behalf of BC First Nations;

WHEREAS the autonomous actions of First Nations to implement protocols and measures to protect their peoples must be recognized and advanced given the persistent challenges they face in accessing comprehensive and adequately funded supports, resources, and supplies;

WHEREAS the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, committed to implement, affirms:

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Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President

Article 21(1): Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and restraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security;

(2): States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS it has been an uphill battle for Indigenous communities, particularly those that are remote, to obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), adequate COVID-19 case information, widespread rapid-testing kits, culturally safe contact tracing, and proper screening methods to prevent travelers from compromising the health of their Elders and community members;

WHEREAS UBCIC's work to support First Nation communities who require aid and resources for their unique needs led to a month-long data-gathering initiative aimed at expanding UBCIC's understanding of the diverse challenges faced by First Nations' in meeting the existing and emergent needs of their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS over the course of a month-long data gathering initiative, UBCIC contacted 161 UBCIC members who provided UBCIC with extensive testimonial data attesting to the substantial social and economic impacts of the pandemic and the province's inequitable and uncoordinated response to it;

WHEREAS the feedback and perspectives provided by the UBCIC membership were used to create a comprehensive report that identified First Nations priority concerns – including community isolation and territorial jurisdiction, access to PPE and medical supplies, developing and implementing Emergency Response Plans, and accessing economic benefits – as well as a list of recommendations from First Nations for addressing these concerns and creating a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to aiding Nations as the pandemic continues; and

WHEREAS the report's recommendations included vital advocacy and action points around improved government communications, funding increases, respecting Aboriginal Title and Rights, addressing racial discrimination, and fulfilling requests for administrative and/or service support.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly recognize UBCIC's membership feedback report and recommendations on COVID-19 as a critical document identifying immediate remedies to social injustice and economic insecurity BC First Nations need and are requesting as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the UBCIC Executive and staff to work with like-minded organizations to continue advancing the needs and requests of First Nations, and to urge the provincial and federal governments to rectify any inequities in their efforts to aid and support First Nation communities during the pandemic; and

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THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the UBCIC Executive to advance and bring UBCIC’s feedback report and recommendations to the provincial and federal governments, and will call upon them to actively address the concerns and needs of UBCIC members by providing informed and organized support, funding, and resources.

Moved: Kukpi7 Wayne Christian, Splatsin
Seconded: Kukpi Lee Spahan, Coldwater Indian Band
Disposition: Carried
Date: September 29, 2020

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