

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

News Release

May 17, 2020

COVID-19 is no excuse for hate: UBCIC demands stronger stand against racism

(xw̓məθkwəy̓ əm (Musqueam), sk̓w̓x̓ wú7mesh (Squamish) and sə́l ilwətaʔ/ sə́l ílwitulh (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, BC). – May 17, 2020) On the evening of May 15, Dakota Holmes, an Indigenous woman and an employee of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), was subjected to a racist attack while walking her dog. A white male physically and verbally attacked her, punching her in the face and yelling racist slurs about Asian people and COVID-19. The incident was prompted by a sneeze from Holmes, who experiences seasonal allergies.

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) strongly and unequivocally condemns racism in any form and at any time. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian communities have experienced an unacceptable, ugly, and deeply disturbing rise in racism. According to the Vancouver Police Department, as of May 1, 2020, there have been 20 anti-Asian hate crimes reported this year, compared to 12 reported in the whole of 2019. This trend speaks to the stark reality that people of colour face disproportionately high risks to their physical and mental survival every day, a risk that has been intensified by dangerous false messaging about COVID-19.

Dakota Holmes stated, “I’m sharing my story to get the message out there that racism is a deadly and sobering threat and every single instance of racism must be addressed and called out by all of us, so that it stops. Although the attacker thought I was Asian at first, I yelled out that I was Indigenous, and he still didn’t stop and didn’t seem to care. As an Indigenous woman I am acutely aware that sexism and racism, often intersecting, are part of my life, and I never take chances on my safety. However, society continues to treat Indigenous women as disposable. What would have happened if I hadn’t had my dog with me, and if I didn’t have a strong network of family and friends for support?”

Holmes’ attacker fled after her dog scared him off. The Vancouver Police have an open investigation and are searching for the perpetrator.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the UBCIC, stated “The Union of BC Indian Chiefs is urging all members of the public and all levels of governments to ensure they actively oppose racism of any kind during COVID-19 and always. In order to keep people safe, we all must be crystal clear that there is absolutely no place for racism in our communities. We are absolutely disgusted and angered about the violent, racist attack against Dakota Holmes, and we offer our sincere and heartfelt sympathy and solidarity to Asian communities who have borne the brunt of COVID-19 related racism. We fully agree with the calls for all levels of government to immediately take urgent steps to prevent and condemn any racist and xenophobic violence and discrimination that is related to COVID-19.”

Anyone with information related to the attack on Dakota Holmes is asked to immediately contact the Vancouver Police Department- (604) 717-3321.

-30-

Media inquiries:

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs: (250) 490-5314

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