

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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News Release

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UBCIC Congratulates NDP for their Historic Win and Calls for Pivotal Action to Advance Indigenous Title and Rights

((X^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam), Sk^wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – October 27, 2020) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) congratulates Premier John Horgan and the NDP for securing a historic victory on election night that will see them form a majority NDP government for the first time in over 20 years, and is calling for immediate joint action on Indigenous priorities.

“We have extremely high expectations for how the NDP will use their majority to fulfill their commitment to reconciliation and the implementation of Indigenous Title and Rights,” stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the UBCIC. “With great political power comes an even greater responsibility to the people, particularly those that are marginalized, overlooked, and underserved. In their short tenure of power, the NDP have worked in partnership with Indigenous peoples to reach historic achievements including the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) and the BC First Nations Gaming Revenue Sharing Limited Partnership. Compared to the Liberals’ sixteen years in office with little movement forward, in just three years it is evident the NDP have made important first steps toward substantial and meaningful progress for Indigenous peoples.”

“The NDP have stated that their four priorities moving forward are response to the pandemic, economic recovery, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and climate change. Continuing to be severely and disproportionately impacted by the effects of COVID-19 and climate change, Indigenous peoples need to be at the forefront of change – their insight, perspectives, and experiences are integral to eliminating discrimination, restoring justice, and shaping the province’s response to its current challenges,” said Chief Don Tom, Vice-President of the UBCIC. “In order for this to be achieved, the NDP will need to ensure that the Declaration Act is fully implemented, with a cross-ministerial mandate issued and the Office of the Premier playing a considerable role in implementation. When the Declaration Act is in full effect, costly and environmentally destructive

public projects such as the Site C dam and the Trans Mountain Expansion project can finally be stopped. As long as these projects violate Indigenous Title and Rights, the Province's actions remain misaligned with the Declaration Act.”

“Moving forward, the NDP government must recognize Indigenous underlying Title, Rights and jurisdiction and meaningfully implement Free, Prior, Informed Consent including remedies to the uneven support First Nations have received so far during the pandemic through emergency management and taking substantive action to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and implement the *Calls for Justice*,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the UBCIC. “Importantly, the NDP must put an immediate end to *Bill 22 - Mental Health Amendment Act*, which would allow for the involuntary detention of youth who overdose. Bill 22 constitutes an incomplete and punitive response to the overdose crisis and has been criticized for having the potential to increase deaths and undermine the rights and safety of Indigenous youth. We are concerned that Premier Horgan referenced this Bill as partial reasoning for calling the election, without apparent consideration of the numerous criticisms brought forward by the BC Chief Coroner, the Representative for Children and Youth, and several other advocacy groups.”

The UBCIC acknowledges and is incredibly encouraged by the high number of Indigenous candidates who put their names forward, and thanks all candidates for their leadership.

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

For more information please visit www.ubcic.bc.ca