

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

STATEMENT

January 25, 2021

FNLC calls on Provincial Government to take necessary actions to address systemic racism within the Royal BC Museum

(X̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and sə̱ilw̱ətaʔ4/sə̱ilw̱itulh (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) — The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is disturbed by several recent media reports outlining ongoing systemic racism and toxic working conditions within the Royal BC Museum (RBCM), a crown corporation established under the *Museum Act* (2003).

Reports first came to light following the July 2020 resignation of Lucy Bell, former head of the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department, who, in an outgoing farewell speech noted many instances of racist attitudes and actions within the RBCM during her three-year tenure, which resulted in her decision to leave for her own well-being and cultural safety. Her comments led to a third-party diversity and inclusion survey which prompted many other staff members to voice concerns over pervasive personal and systemic racism within the RBCM. A formal Public Service Agency investigation was also instigated and has yet to be completed.

We strongly commend Ms. Bell for raising the alarms of the systemic racism occurring within the walls of the RBCM by highlighting her own experiences. It is only by accounts such as these that we can begin to truly understand the depth of systemic anti-Indigenous racism and the breadth of change that is required to effect change and to end it.

The RBCM is a public institution that touts itself as “one of Canada’s greatest cultural treasures,” that “through the vast collections, tells the stories of British Columbia in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire.” In order to accomplish this, the RBCM must tell the stories of BC’s colonial and racist past - it should not and must not be a representative example of racism that still exists in our society today.

The only way to rid our society of racism is to take collective actions to stimulate real and tangible change in all systems, especially public institutions such as the RBCM. The Province and RBCM must foster inclusivity, equity and respect for all persons.

The FNLC urges the timely completion of the investigation underway as soon as possible so that the provincial government can take all necessary actions to properly address and stamp out the systemic racism and improve the working environment at RBCM.



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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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