

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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News Release

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Greenlighting Site C Violates Horgan Government's Commitment to Uphold the *UN Declaration*

((X^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam), Sk^wx^wú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – February 26, 2021) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is deeply troubled and angered by the Province of BC's announcement this morning of their decision to proceed with the beleaguered Site C dam based on government commissioned engineering reports.

"The Site C dam has never had the free, prior and informed consent of all impacted First Nations, and proceeding with the project is a clear infringement of the treaty rights of the West Moberly First Nation," stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, UBCIC Secretary-Treasurer. "The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has called on Canada to suspend Site C until it has the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples. BC did not even attempt to engage First Nations about the safety risks associated with the stability of the dam in the recent reviews. It is unfathomable that such clear human rights violations are somehow ok by this government."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated "The Horgan government has made a monumental error in judgement by proceeding with this disgraceful blight of a project. Costs for Site C have ballooned to more than \$12 billion. Report after report demonstrate the massive environmental damage the Site C dam will have. On top of which there is no need for the electricity it will generate since BC's domestic electricity demand has not significantly increased since 2007." Grand Chief Phillip, who has visited the Peace Valley many times, continued "We stand with the Indigenous peoples who say no to Site C and call out the absolute hypocrisy of this government in claiming to prioritize reconciliation. I have no doubt other First Nations throughout the province are asking if their jurisdiction and self-determination over their territories is going to be respected by the Horgan government."

Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President, stated "Site C stands to flood graves and culturally important sites of the Dane-zaa people, and BC Hydro's own reports acknowledge that the burial

sites are associated in Treaty 8 oral history with the 1919 flu epidemic. Living through the pain and isolation of the current COVID-19 epidemic, we all know how deeply deaths in our communities are felt, and the coldness of the Province of BC in knowingly flooding those graves sharply takes your breath away.” Chief Tom concluded, “Risking the integrity and potential of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* by proceeding with a project that simply does not have consent is a dangerous precedent and will not be forgotten.”

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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