

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

March 4, 2021

Mayor Carol Leclerc, City of Terrace
Via Email Only: cleclerc@terrace.ca

Councillor James Cordeiro
Via Email Only: jcordeiro@terrace.ca

Councillor Sean Bujtas
Via Email Only: sbujtas@terrace.ca

Councillor Brian Downie
Via Email Only: bdownie@terrace.ca

Councillor Lynne Christiansen
Via Email Only: lchristiansen@terrace.ca

Councillor Evan Ramsay
Via Email Only: eramsay@terrace.ca

OPEN LETTER: Resignation of Former Terrace Councillor Jessica McCallum-Miller

Dear City of Terrace Mayor and Council,

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is highly alarmed and disappointed to hear of the resignation of former councillor Jessica McCallum-Miller, who, as the first Indigenous member of your council and an exemplar of Indigenous leadership, was met with the same treatment that has defined Canada's colonial legacy— with the systemic and internalized racism and discrimination that has suppressed our voices, identities, and cultures for centuries.

As a young Gitksan, Nisga'a and Tsimshian woman, Jessica represented something many First Nations, particularly the youth, could look up to and be inspired by: a strong Indigenous woman in a leadership role who was passionate about advancing the rights and welfare of Indigenous peoples and other marginalized members of the community. We are heartbroken to hear that rather than being empowered and supported by her colleagues, Jessica instead suffered great mental, spiritual, and emotional turmoil and stress, forced to grapple with the intolerance, exclusion, and narrow-mindedness that continues to be the lived reality of Indigenous peoples in this country.

Jessica should not have to fight to be heard and respected at the table. She should not have to fight to assert and protect her cultural identity, practices, and traditions. Consequently, UBCIC was disappointed to hear that Jessica had to struggle to not only have the City of Terrace Council respect her diverse and unique perspectives, but to understand the integral need to partake in Localized Cultural Awareness Training with the Tsimshian Peoples of the land. Cultural competency and awareness training should be a mandatory and accepted step for any decision-makers in positions of leadership. Ultimately, the City of Terrace Councillors' reluctance to partake in something that is a foundational component of reconciliation is not only disrespectful to the stewards and original Title holders of the land but belies an attitude that is reductive to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's *Calls to Action*, as well as the legislated progress the provincial and federal governments are making to implement the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

UBCIC urges you, Mayor and Council, to examine your processes, practices, hearts, and minds; we call upon you to identify any internal or suppressed intolerance, prejudices, and fears, and to address these feelings with solutions. We call upon you to support a thorough investigation, not by an ombudsperson who may perpetuate the colonial attitudes prevalent in the council, but by an Indigenous person who is well informed on Indigenous Title and Rights and the TRC's *Calls to Action*. We encourage you to accept cultural competency training in the future and make a clear plan to implement more initiatives aimed at improving inclusion and reconciliation in your community. Finally, we recommend that these issues around inclusion and cultural sensitivity training are discussed and advanced at the Union of BC Municipalities' annual convention so as to secure united action among local governments and municipalities in addressing internal and systemic discrimination and sexism.

When you invalidate and make insignificant Indigenous peoples' knowledge, truth, and experiences, you effectively inflict another wound upon our communities that are still healing from the intergenerational wounds inflicted by the Residential School System and other colonial systems of suppression. Jessica was made to feel this same way – excluded, unheard, and unsupported. We stand in solidarity with Jessica and honour her courage in standing up and bravely speaking her truths.

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: Melissa Moses, UBCIC Women's Representative
Honourable Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Union of BC Municipalities