

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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## News Release

March 24, 2021

### **A Roadblock to Reconciliation: A Call to Dismantle the Barriers that Driver's Licensing Presents to Indigenous Wellbeing and Safety**

((Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – March 24, 2021) First Nations in B.C. and Canada have had to grapple with an indisputable yet overlooked truth for years: an inability to access driver's licensing fundamentally strengthens the systemic inequality and marginalization experienced by First Nations.

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is calling upon the provincial government, ICBC, and other relevant agencies and offices to take strong, unified action to rectify the detrimental impacts that the inequity of access to a driver's license has on the safety of Indigenous women and girls, health and education, access to traditional territories, socio-economic advancement, institutionalized racism, and over-incarceration.

"Many key leaders, policymakers, and decision-makers do not fully realize the double-edged potential of a driver's license – while it has the incredible power to irrevocably change and uplift Indigenous lives, it also has the power to inflict grievous harm and injustice when it remains linked to persisting, interconnected colonial structures that keep First Nations communities disenfranchised and at risk for violence and criminalization," stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the UBCIC. "Understanding the profound role that a driver's license plays in empowering individuals, advancing self-determination, and supporting local economic and community development, Lucy Sager, Founder of the All Nations Driving Academy, has collaborated with UBCIC to produce discussion paper, [The Road to Reconciliation: UBCIC Discussion Paper on Driving Licensing](#). This paper examines the impacts and implications of driver's licensing and training in rural and remote First Nations communities and we urge ICBC, the Ministry of Public Safety, and the Office of the Attorney General to review this paper and commit to

implementing its comprehensive set of recommendations that are aimed at excising the discrimination and inequality entrenched in the current driver's licensing and training system for First Nations."

"*The Road to Reconciliation* examines how driver's licensing in B.C. is implicated in cycle of disempowerment and exclusion, illuminating how vehicles are still a very tangible and complex symbol of colonialism— a vehicle for trauma, violence, and loss – that was historically used to remove Indigenous children from their home and place them in residential schools, and a charged site of colonial violence for many Indigenous women and youth who, without access to a driver's license, remain vulnerable targets for abuse and violence as they hitchhike along highways." stated Chief Don Tom, Vice-President of the UBCIC. "By UBCIC Resolution 2021-04 "Impacts of Current Drivers Licensing Regime on First Nations in B.C." the UBCIC Chiefs Council endorses the recommendations of *The Road to Reconciliation* as critical calls to action that will not only pave the way to a culturally appropriate system of licensing and training but support the implementation of the TRC's *Calls to Action*, MMIWG2S *Calls for Justice*, and the provincial *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*."

"It is imperative that we all recognize the profound influence driver's licensing and training has upon Indigenous health, safety, and welfare; for an Indigenous person, having the unobstructed ability to drive could mean the difference between life and death, criminalization and justice, and exploitation and freedom," stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the UBCIC. "The MMIWG2S crisis continues to take the lives of our women and youth; Indigenous peoples continue to face criminalization, over-incarceration, and unemployment; Elders and vulnerable members of our communities continue to be exploited and taken advantage of; and many people continue to be denied a license simply because they cannot afford or access something as basic as eyeglasses. All of these issues and challenges deserve to be addressed and rectified so that First Nations can continue to lead the way on the road to reconciliation."

By Resolution 2021-04, the UBCIC Chiefs Council requests that the provincial government and ICBC, with adequate funds and supports, begin working with Lucy Sager and likeminded organizations to implement the recommendations and best practices for communities, governments, organizations, and policymakers that will rectify the inconsistent and inequitable access to drivers licensing and training for First Nations.

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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](http://www.ubcic.bc.ca)