

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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News Release

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UBCIC Congratulates Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and All Recipients of the 2021 BC Reconciliation Award

((X^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam), Sk^wx^wú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – April 27, 2021) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) warmly congratulates UBCIC President Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and the eight other recipients of the inaugural British Columbia Reconciliation Award for their extraordinary leadership, courage, wisdom, and dedication in advancing reconciliation for Indigenous people in British Columbia.

The British Columbia Reconciliation Award, created in partnership between the BC Achievement Foundation and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of BC, is a clear testament to the enormous strides Indigenous peoples are collectively making to transform, heal, and empower their lives and communities. The Indigenous landscape in B.C. has been hampered by colonial structures and riddled by systemic racism for centuries, but the nine recipients of the Award have proven that meaningful action is being taken to reclaim this landscape and secure justice, respect, and dignity for future generations.

“Although the road to reconciliation remains rocky, Indigenous peoples are seeking new and inspiring ways to ensure the wrongs and atrocities of the past are not ignored through empty, shallow apologies, but addressed through meaningful action that will advance Indigenous Title and Rights well into the future,” stated Grand Chief Stewart, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “I am grateful and humbled to receive the British Columbia Reconciliation Award, and I raise my hands to the other fearless recipients and nominees. As I have stated in the past, reconciliation cannot be achieved at gunpoint – reconciliation cannot be achieved by peering through the narrow, colonial scope of the past and by relying on the same colonial structures and systems of power that oppressed us to make any progress. Reconciliation is a deeply healing and uplifting process that must be guided and led by Indigenous people. We continue to problematize the use of the term “reconciliation” because it implies two parties are at fault – in the case of BC-Indigenous relations, that is clearly not the case, as the colonial project was unilaterally designed

and imposed by the Crown. Although the future is bright, B.C. must hold itself accountable and continue working with Indigenous peoples to implement the *Declaration on the Indigenous Peoples Act*, ensuring legislation and policy aligns with and supports Indigenous Title and Rights, sovereignty, and jurisdiction.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip had dedicated his life to defending Aboriginal Title and Rights, achieving reconciliation and self-determination for BC First Nations, and offering his support and guidance to Indigenous communities in need. Aside from serving as a member of the Penticton Indian Band Council for 24 years and Chief of the Band for 16 years, Stewart is proud to be currently serving his eighth three-year term as the President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). Grand Chief Stewart continues to work tirelessly to ensure governments stay their course in their efforts to achieve reconciliation for First Nations. He has helped critique, shape, and advance landmark legislation and policies that work to bridge cultural and ideological divides and rectify the wrongdoings of Canada’s colonial governance. Significantly, he and other First Nations Leadership Council members played a seminal role in the passage of the Bill 41 into the Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples Act. Grand Chief Stewart worked tirelessly as part of the FNLC Executive to tirelessly lobby for the legislation, convey the concerns and priorities of BC First Nations to the government, and engage with the provincial government on how to best develop and implement such an Act. His immense wisdom, patience, empathy, and leadership continues to be a source of inspiration and hope for those fighting for their voices to be heard.

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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 and <https://ltgov.bc.ca/grand-chief-stewart-phillip/>