

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



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May 14, 2021

Board of Governors
British Columbia Institute of Technology
3700 Willingdon Ave.
Burnaby, BC V5G 3H2
Via email: Board_of_Governors@bcit.ca

Dear Board of Governors,

Re: Support for Kory Wilson, Executive Director, Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships

We write in response to recent media reports regarding comments attributed to Kory Wilson, Executive Director, Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships at BCIT, about Metis self-government rights.

We express our unequivocal support for Kory Wilson. We are all personally acquainted with Ms. Wilson, and are fully knowledgeable of her professionalism, experience and solid work ethic. We know that in her role at BCIT she has provided leadership and support for all Indigenous students, faculty and staff. As well, we are aware and supportive of her important work at BCIT in creating an Indigenous Vision for BCIT: a response to UNDRIP & Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

We also acknowledge and respect her advocacy for all Indigenous peoples within the broader community, particularly in the realm of providing Indigenous Cultural Awareness to various organizations and public sector, as well as building partnerships among Indigenous peoples and governments and stakeholders. Ms. Wilson is a well-respected Indigenous leader and scholar. We have no hesitation in providing our support to her.

On the issue of Metis rights, we wish to clarify that First Nations in BC are proper title and rights holders and have inherent rights and title, inherent laws and legal systems and jurisdictions which we have exercised prior to contact and which continue to exist. Those who are Metis within the meaning of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, have a familial connection to historic Manitoba Metis settlements. Therefore, Metis cannot be considered to be a people with connection to the territories within BC. There is no legal foundation for Metis Nation BC's claim that Metis peoples have site-specific Aboriginal rights as required to meet the test in R. v. Powley and the courts have confirmed that there is no evidence within BC of a historic or contemporary Metis community. As such, the Chiefs in Assembly at the undersigned Provincial-Territorial Organizations in BC recently passed resolutions rejecting Metis claims attempting to assert the existence of Metis Aboriginal rights in BC.

First Nations remain committed to working alongside Metis people on issues of shared concern, such as improvement of social, health, and economic outcomes, and elimination of racism and discrimination. These collaborations must be founded on the recognition of the different histories of First Nations and Metis people in what is now British Columbia and grounded in appropriate data and evidence.

Respectfully,
FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT


Cheryl Casimer


Robert Phillips


Lydia Hwitsum

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS


Grand Chief Stewart Phillip


Chief Don Tom


Kukpi7 Judy Wilson

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:


Regional Chief Terry Teegee

Cc. Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training
Kathy Kinloch, President, BCIT (kathy_kinloch@bcit.ca)