

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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## ***Statement***

June 16, 2021

### **UBCIC Congratulates Dr. Ronald E. Ignace as the First Commissioner of Indigenous Languages**

((Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – June 15, 2021) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs would like to offer our deep and heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Ron Ignace, former Kukpi7 of the Skeetchestn Indian Band, on his appointment as the first ever Commissioner of Indigenous Languages for Canada.

Commissioner Ignace served as Chief of Skeetchestn for 32 years, before retiring in April of 2020, and also served as the Chair of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council and as the President of the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society. A survivor of the Kamloops Indian Residential School and a fluent speaker of the Secwepemctsin language, he knows on a deeply personal level the history, healing, values, and laws that our languages hold as Indigenous peoples. For decades Commissioner Ignace has been a fierce champion and advocate for the protection and revitalization of Indigenous languages and was actively involved in the development and passage of *An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages*, which was tabled and passed in 2019, the International year for Indigenous Languages. He holds B.A and M.A degrees in Sociology from the University of British Columbia and a PhD in Anthropology from Simon Fraser University, where he has taught Secwepemc language and First Nations Studies courses.

We welcome Commissioner Ignace's appointment to this important role. As someone highly educated in both Secwepemc language, history and culture, and in Western academia, Commissioner Ignace has skillfully, successfully and humbly dedicated much of his life to advancing the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples. We look forward to the important work he will continue to do in ensuring our languages are respected and recognized as the first languages of what we now call Canada, and in ensuring the full implementation of *An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages*.

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*UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.*

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