

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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Press Release

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UBCIC Calls on Canada to Resolve Ongoing Pain and Destruction Inflicted by Colonialism

((X̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and səliw̱ətəł (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – June 21, 2021) This National Indigenous Peoples Day, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) calls on Canada to repudiate the colonial processes, principles, and frameworks it continues to uphold, and to hold itself accountable for its legacy of colonialism, racism, and denial.

“Facing the difficulties of a pandemic, continued systemic discrimination, police harassment and brutality, violations of their human and Indigenous rights, and attempts from governments and corporations to usurp their jurisdiction over their lands and resources, particularly old growth forests, Indigenous peoples have fought against the oppressive tide of colonial forces and persevered,” stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of UBCIC. “This year’s National Indigenous Peoples Day follows immense tragedy and grief – the confirmation by Tḵ’emlups te Secw̱épemc that the remains of 215 children had been found buried on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. Since the news broke out, there has been a rising number of Indian Residential School burial sites confirmed across the country. We take time today to acknowledge and mourn with all Nations and peoples impacted by the reality of Canada’s brutal, genocidal actions. The long shadow cast by Canada’s historical attempts to extinguish Indigenous cultures and societies persists into the present, and we call on Canada to resolve the ongoing pain, trauma, and hurt that continues to be inflicted by practices of colonialism.”

“Despite its stated commitment and efforts to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, including its ongoing work to implement the MMIWG 2SLGBTQQIA+ National Action Plan and action Bill C-15, *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, the Canadian government has consistently and systematically excluded Indigenous peoples from critical decision-making processes and has not afforded them the recognition they deserve as free, self-determining peoples with inherent Title and Rights. We see this callous disregard play out through a range of Indigenous and human rights abuses and violations, including [forced isolation and violent abuse](#) perpetuated against Indigenous youth at youth custody centers in BC,” stated Chief Don Tom, Vice-President of UBCIC. “However, despite the setbacks on the pathway to

reconciliation, Indigenous peoples are empowered by an indefatigable spirit of hope, healing, and unity. Today, UBCIC would also like to acknowledge those at the forefront of the common fight for the recognition of Indigenous rights. We congratulate Madam Justice Ardith Walkem on becoming the first Indigenous woman to be named a Justice on the BC Supreme Court, and we raise our hands to our own Grand Chief Stewart Phillip for his successful kidney transplant and continued fearless leadership.”

“We acknowledge that with the passage of C-15, Canada has committed to repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and the fictitious principle that the lands of Indigenous peoples were *terra nullius*, but note that Canada has continued to uphold a doctrine of denial. 215 children were found buried beneath a residential school that was founded upon denial – the denial of Indigenous life, rights, and culture. Today we call attention to the injustices still to be corrected by Canada, including the systemic violence, abuse, exploitation, and coercion that Indigenous women and girls experience as the MMIWG crisis,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of UBCIC. “In moving forward, the delegitimization and violation of Indigenous women’s rights, as a tool used since colonization to disenfranchise and dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands and resources, must end. Indigenous women are on the frontlines working to protect the environment within their territories from climate change impacts and destructive resource extraction and emissions intensive projects. Canada must work to ensure these projects, particularly the TMX, does not endanger their Title, Rights, safety, and welfare of Indigenous communities.”

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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