

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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June 24, 2021

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Terrasses de la Chaudière 10 Wellington North Tower
Gatineau QC K1A 0H4
Via Email Only: minister@aadnc-aandc.gc.ca

OPEN LETTER: UBCIC Calls for the Immediate Resignation of Carolyn Bennett as Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations following Racist, Demeaning Message to Indigenous MP Jody Wilson-Raybould

Dear Minister Bennett,

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is deeply disturbed and disgusted by the extreme callousness, spite, and ignorance you have shown through the racist message you sent to MP Jody Wilson-Raybould on Twitter, and is calling for your immediate resignation as the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

Instead of heeding MP Wilson-Raybould's message with the seriousness warranted as she called for immediate and transformative action following the horrific news that another 751 unmarked gravesites have been located at a former Indian Residential School site in Saskatchewan– you decided to lash out with a colonizer's tongue. This was a cowardly attempt to silence a powerful Indigenous voice calling out for truth, action and justice.

With a single word – “pension” – you not only decided to perpetuate a damaging racial stereotype, that Indigenous peoples are lazy and only financially motivated- but dismissed the pressing, overarching issue of residential schools, missing and murdered children, and Indigenous rights. Your implying that MP Wilson-Raybould's fight for equality and justice is only motivated by a pension is categorically untrue, misogynistic, and condemnable. MP Wilson-Raybould is a strong and successful Indigenous woman who has, throughout her career, faced unwarranted attempts to discredit and tear down her reputation, hard work, and integrity.

UBCIC is especially disturbed that you, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations who has a mandate of the highest order to protect and advance Indigenous Title, Rights, and welfare, would resort to a low-handed attempt to shame and insult an Indigenous woman and fellow Member of Parliament. Time and time again we have seen your government perpetuate colonial-era, sexist stereotypes that Indigenous women cannot be powerful, forthright, and steadfast in positions of power, but rather confrontational, bothersome, and egotistic. Your message and others like it need to end. This was not merely a lapse in judgement, but concrete evidence of the racism, misogyny and spitefulness you carry yourself with. Through your actions, the hypocrisy of your “most important relationship” with Indigenous peoples has been laid bare for all Canadians to see.

Apart from publicly apologizing and reaching out personally to MP Wilson-Raybould, we are calling for your immediate resignation from cabinet. Any attempts at making amends for racist, misogynistic, and inappropriate rhetoric and action must also be genuine and meaningful – not shallow attempts at damage control and saving face. Now is not the time for promises to do better. If you have an ounce of integrity, and any true respect for your relationship with Indigenous people, you will act with full accountability and immediately step down as Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Chief Don Tom
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau