

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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July 26, 2021

BCCLA Board of Directors  
C/o David Fai, President  
Via Email: [President@bccla.org](mailto:President@bccla.org); [vp@bccla.org](mailto:vp@bccla.org)

**Open Letter: BCCLA Board's Letter to Community and Weak Support for Harsha Walia Validates Racist, Alt-Right Agenda and Proves Misogyny and Discrimination Continue to Silence Indigenous Peoples and their Allies**

Dear BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) Board of Directors,

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) writes to express our extreme disappointment, concern, and alarm over the BCCLA Board President's letter to the community and the resignation announcement of BCCLA Executive Director, Harsha Walia. Harsha's tweet was misconstrued and misrepresented as a call to violence despite her repeated statements to the contrary, and rather than stand with her, you issued a letter to the public apologizing for the Tweet. Harsha is a public figure well known for her tireless advocacy and core values of anti-racism, justice, and equality- you hired her for this, and in your "heavy hearts" we are confident that you know she would never call for violence of any kind.

As a South Asian woman (and the first woman and racialized leader of the BCCLA), Harsha has also received a vicious and unjustified torrent of hate, misogyny and racism that continues to be weaponized and strengthened by those with alt-right, racist, and colonial views. Your lack of solidarity with her unintentionally handed a win to those voices.

UBCIC will never condone or support violence and hate, and we do not take any inflammatory or divisive statements lightly. It is thus with the utmost confidence in Harsha's integrity and intentions – her intent to condemn colonialism and call for the end of oppressive systems, like the residential school system, which have institutionalized anti-Indigenous racism and colonial violence – that the UBCIC continues to stand with and believe in Harsha. As Harsha has clarified, her Tweet "Burn them all down," was not a call for arson and further violence, but a specific phrase used to call for the end of colonial systems that continue

to have far-reaching, detrimental impacts upon the Title, Rights, and welfare of Indigenous peoples. During an extremely triggering, traumatic, and fraught time, in which emotions and tensions were running high over the discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves of Indigenous children, Harsha's tweet was consistently taken out of context and distorted by those with racist, alt-right views, and by those intent on diverting attention away from the reckoning of Canada's genocide. These people also exploited and used the situation to hurl vile, inexcusable hateful comments at Harsha – their racism and misogyny is deplorable and indicative of the strong hostility and discrimination that continues to be used to silence and undermine members of BIPOC and marginalized communities. However, those voices were not surprising- what surprised us was that the Board of Directors of BC's preeminent civil liberties association, seemed to freeze completely, taking five days to issue any response at all, and then to finally offer an apology for the tweet itself.

The BCCLA ultimately has a mandate to promote, defend, sustain, and extend civil liberties and human rights for all, and these rights and liberties include the security of the person, freedom of religion and freedom of expression. It is unacceptable that an extremely passionate and compassionate advocate – who has led BCCLA in its championing for civil liberties and human rights – be scrutinized and punished for exercising her freedom of expression. UBCIC is disappointed that the BCCLA board has prioritized your organization's image and interests over unequivocally defending Harsha and calling attention to the destructive forces of colonialism and racism that led to the unmarked graves of Indigenous children in Canada, and that continue to foment divisions and hate today. We have always enjoyed working together and are grateful for the close relationship our staff have always shared. As a board, we implore you to take a closer look at who you are and what you stand for- we ask that you choose to stand with us, refuse to cave to racists and racism, and condemn colonialism and all its related, oppressive institutions.

**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: BCCLA Board of Directors  
Harsha Walia