



August 13, 2021

Ref: 248917

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President

Chief Don Tom, Vice-President

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer

Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
c/o Email: djohnson@ubcic.bc.ca

Dear Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Chief Don Tom, and Kukpi7 Judy Wilson:

Thank you for your letter of July 28, 2021, calling for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills, and Training to commission an independent and distinctions-based investigation and report into Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in British Columbia's public education system. Your call for immediate action and to work alongside the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is heard and understood.

I recognize that education outcomes for Indigenous students in British Columbia have historically been, and currently are, significantly lower than outcomes for non-Indigenous students and that Indigenous students and families report experiences of systemic barriers and overt racism in BC's education system. A systemic review of the K–12 education system and the experiences of British Columbia's Indigenous students was one of the recommendations heard at the 2nd Annual Minister's Community Roundtable on Anti-Racism in Education in July 2021.

The Ministry of Education has been developing a K–12 Anti-Racism Action Plan in consultation with Rightsholders, community organizations and education partners. Through the Anti-Racism Action Plan, the Ministry has committed to a distinctions-based Indigenous Anti-racism Strategy to address systemic racism towards First Nations students in the public education system, co-led with FNESC. I acknowledge that a systemic review would support an improved understanding of Indigenous student educational experiences and would provide findings and recommendations that would help to inform an Indigenous Anti-racism Strategy.

As you know, the recently released Consultation Draft of the Declaration Act Action Plan includes a commitment to *'Conduct external review of Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in the provincial public education system and create a strategy, including resources and supports, to address findings'* (Action 3.4). I take these recommended actions seriously and am committed to our government's reconciliation commitments and alignment with recommendations from completed reports and reviews that have identified inherent systemic barriers for Indigenous Peoples to realize their rights under the internationally recognized standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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I look forward to discussing this matter further with our partners in the coming weeks.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Whiteside". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Whiteside
Minister

pc: Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training