

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

FOUNDING HEAD OFFICE
209 - 345 Chief Alex Thomas Way
Kamloops, B.C. V2H 1H1
Tel: 250-828-9746
Fax: 250-828-0319



VANCOUVER OFFICE
401 - 312 Main Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6A 2T2
Tel: 604-684-0231
Fax: 604-684-5726
1-800-793-9701
Email: ubcic@ubcic.bc.ca
Web: www.ubcic.bc.ca

Statement

September 30, 2021

National Day of Truth and Reconciliation is a Call to Action: More Education on Residential Schools and More Supports Needed for Survivors and Indigenous Communities

(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – September 30, 2021) Today the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) observes the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. UBCIC commemorates the fearless leadership and tireless efforts by Indian residential school Survivors and First Nations like Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (TteS) who continue to seek justice, truth, and accountability for the missing and unidentified Indigenous children who never made it home. On this first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, UBCIC encourages British Columbians and Canadians to reflect on the truth of the Survivors' experiences, and to acknowledge that this was a genocide, involving the forced removal of children from our families and Nations, placing more than 150,000 children in those institutions to try to "take the Indian out of the child." Today is not only a day of remembering the truth and honouring the experiences of Survivors, but a time to be steadfast in our values that every child matters.

"In what has been an eye-opening, harrowing, and empowering year of reckoning and challenge, the discovery of the unmarked graves and burial sites of children places a sombre pallor over this first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, and nothing short of truth and justice will rectify the harmful, intergenerational and continuing impacts of Residential Schools," stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President. "Since coming forward on May 27, 2021, to make public their efforts to learn about the truth of unmarked burials of children at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School site, TteS, like other First Nations in BC and Canada with schools within their traditional territories, our people have the burden of the difficult work to confirm and identify hundreds of children who did not make it home. UBCIC's expresses our outmost gratitude and

raises our hands to TteS and all other caretaker First Nation communities across the country for helping forge a hard but necessary pathway to the truth in Canada about mass unmarked burial sites. They have made it known, loud and clear, that the time is *now* to document, investigate, and to hold those who operated the schools, especially Canada and the Catholic Church, accountable for the genocide inflicted upon First Nations in Canada.”

Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice President stated, “The necessary work of decolonization is not going to be advanced by symbolic action and talk; Canada and BC must take action to hold themselves accountable and make good on their many, critical commitments to Indigenous peoples. UBCIC thanks TteS for their unwavering guidance and support in working with UBCIC to develop and endorse UBCIC Resolution 2021-29, a critical document that identifies the vast legal implications and challenges that have arisen from the failings of the Government of Canada and the Roman Catholic Church to document and protect the deceased children of the residential schools. Today, UBCIC renews the critical directives and calls to action articulated in Resolution 2021-29; we urge BC and Canada to continue supporting First Nations who are conducting the identification and guardianship of Indian Residential School burial sites, and to establish long overdue reparations and supports for residential school survivors and all those impacted by the atrocities of the past.”

“Today, UBCIC wishes all those impacted by centuries of intergenerational trauma and colonial violence the safety of a moment of quiet reflection, time, and space they need to heal and process the events of the past year,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of UBCIC. “Despite centuries of colonialization and efforts to stamp out our culture and voices, today are strong and united in our resolve to ensure the truth of the residential school policy is understood as the genocide it was. We will press for real justice, and remedies for these harms at the individual and Nation level. We honour those who are educating Canadians, and ensuring the truth is heard, like the founder of Orange Shirt Day, Phyllis Webstad, and all other victims, survivors, or thrivers as we prefer to call them. We remember the children who were lost to the Residential School System and those who left the schools but never found their way home due to the damage the system did to their hearts and minds. We will never forget this and today we ensure that Canadians learn the truth and we hope they stand with us for justice, peace and human rights.”

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Media inquiries:

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, 250-490-5314

Chief Don Tom, Vice-President, 250-813-3315

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer, c/o 778-866-0548

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