

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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## News Release

October 7, 2021

### Boost Vaccination Rates, Save Lives: UBCIC Urges First Nations and British Columbians to Get Vaccinated

(Xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. October 7, 2021) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is issuing an urgent and critical call for First Nations and all British Columbians to get their full COVID-19 vaccinations immediately. Lagging vaccination rates and unvaccinated individuals are continuing to cause COVID-19 infection and hospitalizations rates to climb, placing enormous, preventable stress upon hospitals and health-care resources, and threatening the lives of those who are unable to be vaccinated, including children under 12.

“We must listen to and spread the indisputable truth: vaccinations work. They save lives. They lower transmission rates and are the best defense we have against the pandemic,” stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President. “COVID-19 and vaccination misinformation that contradict public health orders and guidance must be stopped. The numbers and data don’t lie: COVID cases among First Nations in BC [continue to rise](#) and from Sept. 24-30, people not fully vaccinated accounted for 71.5% of cases in BC, while from Sept. 17-30, they accounted for 81.4% of hospitalizations. The influx of COVID patients being hospitalized also means that major strain is placed upon hospitals where vital resources and attention are being diverted away from non-COVID patients needing essential medical attention and treatment. We urge the public to recognize that lives are at stake when it comes to vaccinations. I am a transplant recipient; *please* get vaccinated so that immunocompromised people like me can stay safe and hospital space can be freed for non-COVID patients needing essential surgeries and care.”

“Health Minister Adrian Dix and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry have repeatedly outlined the concrete, scientifically backed benefits of COVID-19 vaccinations and UBCIC echoes their statements: vaccinations add a critical, absolutely essential layer of protection,” stated Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President. “UBCIC calls on youth to heed the public health orders, including guidance around social gatherings and events, and to recognize that getting vaccinated is not just

a step to protect your own health, but a step to protecting the lives of your parents, grandparents, and loved ones. In previous pandemics, Indigenous peoples suffered deep losses due to how we were ignored and purposefully targeted for disease. This time we have the tools and the solution which we must take advantage of in honour of our ancestors who did not have the same. We must continue forging a path to a future in which everyone can be healthy, safe, and protected.”

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, UBCIC Secretary-Treasurer stated “Regions with lower vaccinations rates continue to have higher numbers of COVID cases, as is the case with Northern Health region where percentages of vaccinated people are still below the provincial average. This must change. We must remain vigilant and change the trajectory of infection rates in BC, ensuring everyone does their due diligence in getting vaccinated.” Kukpi7 Wilson continued “As schools are in session and in-person this fall, it is *critical* we protect the lives of our children and prevent COVID-19 cases, clusters, and outbreaks in schools. As someone with a grandson that is too young to get vaccinated, I urge everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated – to not just protect themselves against the virus, but to protect children and those unable, for medical reasons, to get vaccinated. We must look past attempts to sow and spread misinformation and division and work together to ensure each and everyone of us does their duty to get vaccinated.”

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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](http://www.ubcic.bc.ca)

**Key links:**

Province of BC: [How to get vaccinated for COVID-19](#)

First Nations Health Authority: [COVID-19 Vaccine](#)