



UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

August 12, 2024

Powell River Council
City of Powell River, B.C.
Via Email Only

West Vancouver Council
City of West Vancouver, B.C.
Via Email Only

Sechelt Council
City of Sechelt, B.C.
Via Email Only

Kamloops Council
City of Kamloops, B.C.
Via Email Only

Quesnel Council
City of Quesnel, B.C.
Via Email Only

B.C. Municipalities
Via Email Only

RE: UBCIC Resolution 2024-33 “Rejection of Residential School Denialism”

Dear Powell River Council, Sechelt Council, Quesnel Council, West Vancouver Council, Kamloops Council and all B.C. Municipalities:

We are writing with respect to the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) Resolution 2024-33 “Rejection of Residential School Denialism” which was presented, affirmed, and endorsed unanimously at the UBCIC Chiefs Council on June 11, 2024 (enclosed).

By Resolution 2024-33, the UBCIC Chiefs Council calls for all levels of government and the public to:

- uphold the testimony of those with lived experience who survived and witnessed crimes and human rights violations at Residential Schools, along with the findings of experts, and the documentation of physical and archival evidence captured by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and by subsequent investigations by First Nations and partners at former Residential Schools sites across Canada;
- implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions’ 94 Calls to Action;
- advance policies that acknowledge and take responsibility for the history and harmful legacy of Residential Schools; and
- support healing for survivors.

Further, the UBCIC Chiefs Council categorically rejects any and all Residential School racist denialism and ardent dissemination of racist misinformation put forward by the authors of *Grave Error – How the Media Misled Us* and perpetuated by members of the public and elected officials.

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UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

The UBCIC Chiefs Council stands with survivors and intergenerational survivors of Residential Schools and their families, as well as the children who never made it home and all those who are harmed by the actions of those involved with the production and distribution of the book *Grave Error – How the Media Misled Us* and the deeply troubling trend of Residential School racist denialism and any unwillingness to accept historical fact and the work of experts.

We look forward to your response.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President

Chief Don Tom
Vice-President

Chief Marilyn Slett
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: UBCIC Chiefs Council

Encl: UBCIC Resolution 2024-33

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UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS CHIEFS COUNCIL

JUNE 10TH – 11TH, 2024

SHXWHÁ:Y VILLAGE COMMUNITY CULTURAL CENTRE (STÓ:LŌ TERRITORY)

Resolution no. 2024-33

RE: Rejection of Residential School Racist Denialism

WHEREAS Indigenous peoples in Canada who have been subjected to Canada’s policies of forced assimilation, including through the forcible removal of children to Residential Schools to “kill the Indian in the child,” have always known the truth of the crimes and atrocities committed at these institutions, including the loss of culture and language, emotional, spiritual, sexual, physical, and psychological abuse and other injustices that severely impacted entire communities and families for generations;

WHEREAS the ongoing investigations into the likely remains of children who were forced to attend former Residential Schools across Canada in unmarked graves have provided evidence of state-sanctioned genocide, human rights and humanitarian law violations, and further demonstrate an ongoing pattern of violence inflicted upon Indigenous peoples by the government of Canada and the churches through the Residential School system and colonial laws and policies;

WHEREAS increasingly, since the publicization of these investigative findings, there has been a troubling trend of Residential School denialism. Particularly concerning is the dissemination of misinformation and harmful denialism by individuals elected to public office;

WHEREAS in April 2024, this pernicious phenomenon came to light in B.C. in media reports against the Mayor of Quesnel and his wife for distributing a book entitled *Grave Error – How the Media Misled Us* that indicates genocide did not occur at Residential Schools and essentially questions their very existence and well-documented harms against Indigenous peoples. There have been concerns that materials such as these are being widely distributed amongst local government circles to perpetuate racist attitudes that uphold white supremacy and deny the realities of Canada and the Churches’ roles in Residential Schools;

WHEREAS other examples of genocide denial such as Holocaust denialism have been widely documented and discredited as the work of individuals or groups who feel threatened or fear loss of power and instead choose to perpetuate stereotypes and hateful beliefs used to undermine the realities of history;

WHEREAS Canada's policies of forced assimilation of Indigenous children at Residential Schools was intentional and is widely documented. The pain of denialism is deeply offensive and compounds the suffering that generations of survivors have already endured and has no place in public discourse;

WHEREAS the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of B.C., passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:

Article 7(2): Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.

Article 8(1): Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.

(2): States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for: (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources; (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights; (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration; (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them;

WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) estimates that 150,000 children were forced to attend Residential Schools nationwide, identifying that more than 4,100 children died at these facilities –although survivors and families have maintained that that number is much higher. This number is likely to rise as Indigenous communities continue to document and identify missing children and unmarked graves through archival, archaeological and oral histories;

WHEREAS UBCIC Resolutions 2003-14, 2006-23, 2008-04, 2010-34, 2011-14, 2013-16, 2013-42, 2015-35, 2016-45, 2021-29, 2021-49, 2021-50, 2022-65 cite the numerous horrors of Residential Schools and the need for comprehensive healing supports for survivors, families and communities;

WHEREAS by UBCIC Resolution 2015-28 and 2021-29, the UBCIC Chiefs Council called upon the government of Canada to take immediate steps to develop a legal framework to fully implement all recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and to provide immediate funding and supports to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, and other First Nations such as Cowessess First Nation as they develop and implement frameworks and processes to further identify, document, maintain, commemorate, and protect the remains of the children found buried at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and the site itself, and any additional supports required by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc in undertaking this difficult work as the First Nation to confirm the presence unmarked graves;

WHEREAS the ongoing recoveries of missing and unidentified Indigenous children at former Residential School sites have triggered and re-traumatized Residential School survivors, including intergenerational survivors, and have brought to public attention the immense trauma, violence, and abuse Indigenous peoples and communities continue to heal from with strength, courage, and resolve;

WHEREAS reconciliation requires accountability, compassion and action. The revelation and publicization of these dark realities of Canadian history require Canada and settler Canadians to do the uncomfortable work of examining their own histories, their relationships with First Nations and place, to learn and to take action to right historical and ongoing wrongs;

WHEREAS adequate, long-term funding is required from the government of Canada to complete the work commenced at former Residential School sites across Canada to address these wrongs. Without adequate funding, the missing children will never be returned home to their families and their home communities; and

WHEREAS Residential School denialism and any attitudes or actions which seek to undermine the reality of the horrors of Canada's Residential School policies, particularly for political gain, is deeply painful, harmful to survivors and their families and acts in direct opposition to the crown's commitments to reconciliation, the UN Declaration and the Calls to Action set out by the TRC.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council categorically rejects any and all Residential School racist denialism and ardent dissemination of racist misinformation put forward by the authors of *Grave Error – How the Media Misled Us*, and perpetuated by members of the public and elected officials;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council stands with survivors and intergenerational survivors of Residential Schools and their families, as well as the children who never made it home and all those who are harmed by the actions of those involved with the production and distribution of the book *Grave Error – How the Media Misled Us* and the deeply troubling trend of Residential School racist denialism and any unwillingness to accept historical fact and the work of experts;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council calls for all levels of government and the public to:

- uphold the testimony of those with lived experience who survived and witnessed crimes and human rights violations at Residential Schools, along with the findings of experts, and the documentation of physical and archival evidence captured by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and by subsequent investigations by First Nations and partners at former Residential Schools sites across Canada;
- implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' 94 Calls to Action;
- advance policies that acknowledge and take responsibility for the history and harmful legacy of Residential Schools; and
- support healing for survivors; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council reaffirms Resolution 2021-29 and calls on the government of Canada and B.C. to:

- commit to sustainable long-term funding to support continued work by *all affected First Nations* to locate and identify missing children and unmarked graves at former Residential School across Canada; and
- work in collaboration with First Nations to counter and address Residential School racist denialism in B.C., including by developing targeted education campaigns to counter denialism in the public and public sector.

Moved: Kukpi Lee Spahan, Coldwater Indian Band
Seconded: Kukpi7 James Hobart, Spuzzum First Nation
Disposition: Carried
Date: June 11, 2024