



UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

October 2, 2024

Mayor John Henderson
District of Sechelt
Via Email Only: MayorJohn@sechelt.ca

District of Sechelt Council
City of Sechelt, B.C.
Via Email Only: AllCouncil@sechelt.ca

RE: UBCIC Resolution 2024-61 “Resignation of District of Sechelt Mayor John Henderson”

Dear Mayor Henderson and District of Sechelt Council:

We are writing with respect to Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) Resolution 2024-61 “Resignation of District of Sechelt Mayor John Henderson” which was presented, affirmed, and endorsed unanimously at the UBCIC Annual General Assembly on September 26th, 2024 (enclosed).

By Resolution 2024-61, the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly join shísháhlh Nation in calling for the Mayor of the District of Sechelt, John Henderson, to immediately resign, and to apologize to survivors, intergenerational survivors, families, and impacted communities.

Further, the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly urge all municipal elected leadership in B.C. to learn about the history and legacies of Residential Schools and Canada’s policies of forced assimilation from credible sources including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report. For your information, by Resolution 2024-61, the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly will also be calling on the government of B.C. to immediately bring the Community Charter, SBC 2003, c 26, the Local Government Act, RSBC 2015, c 1, and other legislation and policy that make up the local government legislative framework into alignment with the UN Declaration as required by section 3 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, SBC 2019, c 44, including requiring a code of conduct that upholds the UN Declaration.

In closing, the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly call on municipal governments in B.C., including the District of Sechelt, to adopt and implement the UN Declaration as the framework for reconciliation, as called for by Call to Action 43 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. We look forward to your response.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
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Chief Don Tom
Vice-President

Chief Marilyn Slett
Secretary-Treasurer

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UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

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CC: UBCIC Chiefs Council
shíshálh Nation Council

Encl: UBCIC Resolution 2024-61

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UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS
56TH ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SEPTEMBER 24TH – 26TH, 2024
MUSQUEAM COMMUNITY CENTRE, X^WMƏƏK^WƏY^ƏM (MUSQUEAM TERRITORY)

Resolution no. 2024-61

RE: Resignation of District of Sechelt Mayor John Henderson

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 there has been a troubling rise in Residential School denialism across B.C. Particularly concerning is the dissemination of misinformation and harmful denialism by individuals elected to public office;

WHEREAS John Henderson, Mayor of the District of Sechelt, has publicly admitted that he brought the book *Grave Error – How the Media Misled Us* (Grave Error) into the municipal hall, and that he has discussed that material with senior staffers, among others. Grave Error, among other things, indicates that genocide did not occur at Residential Schools and essentially questions their very existence and well-documented harms against Indigenous peoples;

WHEREAS the UN Declaration, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of B.C., passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:

Article 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law.

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Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President

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Article 2: Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their Indigenous origin or identity.

Article 3: Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

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.

Article 43: The rights recognized herein constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world;

WHEREAS by Resolution 2021-39 the UBCIC Chiefs Council called for the provincial and federal governments to fund continued work by all affected First Nations to identify missing children and unmarked graves at former Residential Schools across Canada, and to 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;

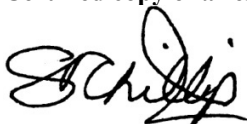
WHEREAS on April 2, 2024, UBCIC published a press release condemning Residential School denialism in response to reports of multiple municipal leaders distributing the book Grave Error. UBCIC sent further correspondence denouncing the Mayor of Quesnel for promoting Grave Error by allowing a contributor to attend their meeting and giving her a platform to spread further misinformation;

WHEREAS on June 11, 2024, the UBCIC Chiefs Council passed Resolution 2024-33 “Rejection of Residential School Racist Denialism” which rejects all Residential School racist denialism and dissemination of racist misinformation put forward by the authors of Grave Error and perpetuated by members of the public and elected officials. Further, Resolution 2024-33 identifies specific actions for all levels of government and the public to take, and reaffirms Resolution 2021-39;

WHEREAS on August 12, 2024, UBCIC sent a letter to all municipalities in follow up to Resolution 2024-33, articulating the calls to action. The letter was sent to the Union of BC Municipalities for their assistance with distribution and was also directed to several municipalities where UBCIC is aware of discussions about residential school issues, denials of the history of the injustice of residential schools, and actions contrary to the letter and spirit of reconciliation. This was intended to assist in discussions within those communities towards a greater understanding of the well-documented harms against Indigenous peoples and the importance of reconciliation;

WHEREAS on September 6, 2024, District of Sechelt Council sent correspondence to UBCIC in support of UBCIC Resolution 2024-33, rejecting Residential School denialism and supporting survivors. This correspondence was not signed or supported by the Mayor of the District of Sechelt, John Henderson;

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WHEREAS on September 17, 2024, shíshálh Nation sent correspondence to the Mayor of the District of Sechelt condemning his failure to stand with District of Sechelt Council in supporting UBCIC Resolution 2024-33, denouncing his leadership, calling on him to immediately step aside, and directing future work and communications with shíshálh Nation to be carried out with District of Sechelt Council exclusively; and

WHEREAS the *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26, the *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, and other legislation and policy that make up the local government legislative framework in B.C. define the core authority of local governments and guide decision-making and must be brought into alignment with the UN Declaration to ensure that minimum First Nations human rights standards are upheld at the local government level.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly join shíshálh Nation in calling for the Mayor of the District of Sechelt, John Henderson, to immediately resign, and to apologize to survivors, intergenerational survivors, families, and impacted communities;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly urge all municipal elected leadership in B.C. to learn about the history and legacies of Residential Schools and Canada's policies of forced assimilation from credible sources including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council calls on the government of B.C. to immediately bring the *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26, the *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, and other legislation and policy that make up the local government legislative framework into alignment with the UN Declaration as required by section 3 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, SBC 2019, c 44, including requiring a code of conduct that upholds the UN Declaration; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council calls on all municipal governments in B.C. to adopt and implement the UN Declaration as the framework for reconciliation, as called for by Call to Action 43 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

Moved: Kukpi7 James Hobart, Spuzzum First Nation

Seconded: Kukpi Lee Spahan, Coldwater Indian Band

Disposition: Carried

Date: September 26, 2024

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