

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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News Release

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UBCIC Recognizes Opioid Crisis as “A State of Emergency”

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, B.C. – March 11, 2019) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is demanding action by BC Premier John Horgan, Attorney General David Eby, and Minister of Finance Carole James, as well as Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Judy Darcy, on the escalating opioid crisis that is devastating First Nations communities in BC.

The UBCIC calls on BC to recognize that the opioid overdose crisis constitutes a state of emergency, a status already declared by the BC Health Authority. Further, the UBCIC, following the findings of a number of investigative reports, calls on the provincial government to launch a public inquiry into the influence of international organized crime syndicates in fueling the crisis.

“While the opioid crisis has affected every region of Canada, British Columbia tops the four regions hardest hit, with First Nations people facing the brunt of the impacts”, stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the UBCIC. “First Nations people are five times more likely than non-First Nations citizens to experience an opioid-related overdose event, and three times more likely to die from an opioid-related overdose; First Nations people are twice as likely to be dispensed an opioid than non-First Nations citizens; and on some reserves, an opioid overdose is reported every two-hours. These statistics are completely unacceptable, and BC must immediately act or be held accountable and liable for their inaction.”

The UBCIC Chiefs Council resolution supports the upcoming First Nations Opioid Conference, “Opioids: Wiping the Tears. Healing the Pain,” that is organized by the Global Indigenous Council. The Conference will be held at the Grey Eagle Resort in Tsuut’ina Territory, Calgary, Alberta, May 6-7, 2019, and seeks “to outline a clear pathway of actions and recommendations for First Nations coping with and remedying the crisis.”

“This devastating crisis is stealing the lives of our most vulnerable. In fact I lost my 42 year old son, Kenny, to a carfentanyl overdose last August”, stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the UBCIC. “The UBCIC is fully committed to exhausting all appropriate avenues to find an immediate solution to this crisis. It is imperative for the government of BC to commit to the same. Collectively First Nations and the BC government can heal these wounds and protect our communities.”

“The Government of Canada estimates that in the last two-years more than 9,000 Canadians have died because of the opioid crisis,” said Tom Rodgers, the Opioid Conference Director. “In our cities and towns, on our reserves and in our homes, in the last two-years we have lost 57 times more loved ones than Canada lost in the entire Afghanistan War,” continued Rodgers. “But we were not at war. Now we are at war with Big Pharma, and we intend to hold it accountable for the opioid crisis and secure reparations for First Nations to invest in the healing and recovery of our communities.”

For more information: www.firstnationopiodhealing.ca or email: info@firstnationopiodhealing.ca

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