

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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News Release

October 12, 2022

UBCIC Stands with *Aki-Kwe*, Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

(xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – October 12, 2022) We are aware of the CBC story regarding Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond that was published on October 12, 2022.

Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond has been a fierce, ethical, and groundbreaking advocate for Indigenous peoples for decades including representing the UBCIC for more than five years and a long working relationship before that. We have known her work to be of the highest order, and her integrity to be beyond reproach. She has demonstrated time and again her commitment to human rights, justice, and reconciliation, including in her role as the Representative for Children and Youth and her investigation into systemic racism in the health care system “In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care.”

Issues of First Nations identity and community membership are for Indigenous peoples, families, and governments to sort through based on their own laws, customs, and traditions. We understand that Chief Kelly Wolfe of Muskeg Lake First Nation, and her kinship family, all confirm that Dr. Turpel-Lafond is part of their community under their Indigenous laws.

The loss of connection, kinship, and community, which many Indigenous peoples have experienced, is a direct result of colonialism. It is not the role of the media, the crown, or anyone else to tell us who we are. Tabloid style, divide and conquer public investigations result in tremendous harm and are a legacy of assimilationist colonial policies which have long enacted violence upon and sought to erase Indigenous women, and can reinforce false, sexist and racist stereotypes of Indigenous peoples.

In our view the media should be focusing its resources and energy on holding Crown governments to account, reporting on the enduring legacy of colonialism in Canada, and investigating the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples around the globe. Investigations into the ancestry of

individuals, filled with personal photos and digging into private matters, does not move justice, rights implementation, and reconciliation forward. We also wonder if Dr. Turpel-Lafond's outspoken advocacy has unfairly made her a target.

We are incredibly proud of the work Dr. Turpel-Lafond has done for the UBCIC and look forward to continuing this work into the future.

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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