

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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## News Release

May 5, 2022

### **UBCIC Applauds Settlement Between Maxwell Johnson and BMO; Launches Review of Discrimination against First Nations in BC when using Status Cards**

(X<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skw<sup>x</sup>wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – May 5, 2022) The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) joins the Heiltsuk Nation and applauds the settlement announced today between Maxwell Johnson and his 14-year-old granddaughter and the Bank of Montreal. BMO staff called Vancouver Police on Maxwell and his granddaughter when Maxwell went to make a deposit, leading to them being handcuffed, detailed and humiliated. Mr. Johnson and his granddaughter's complaint against the Vancouver Police Department at the BC Human Rights Tribunal remains ongoing.

The UBCIC has intervenor status in the Human Rights Tribunal matter and wants to ensure that individual and systemic racism against First Nations in Vancouver is addressed at this level and will be vigorously advocating for acknowledge of racism at that level and, more importantly, meaningful changes.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated "Maxwell and his granddaughter should never have been racially profiled and discriminated against when they tried to do something that everyone does—go to a business and be treated with respect. I am glad BMO has accepted responsibility and is putting changes in place; however, discrimination against First Nations people in British Columbia is rampant, and especially discrimination when we use our Indian status cards as identification or in the course of regular business as consumers or shoppers. UBCIC is launching a review of discrimination against our peoples over the use of status cards, and we will be surveying and gathering new data on this and reporting on it in Fall 2022. All financial institutions, businesses and service agencies, need to get informed and create a culturally safe, equitable and respectful environment for First Nations peoples."

“Ending racism and discrimination is going to require everyone to acknowledge and change so that the prejudices and assumptions that profile our citizens as criminals or wrongdoers ends,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, UBCIC Secretary-Treasurer. “The stress on our people of having to endure racism has been clear with this case, and it is not over yet, especially in relation to the Vancouver Police and their conduct. Ending racism against our people in public services is work that we are making some headway on at this time; however, addressing racism in commercial and business activities, is going to require much more understanding of how widespread and impactful this is in our lives, and in the private sector in particular. Many of our people have an Indian status card as their main identification, and for this we are told repeatedly about cases where they face ridicule, mistreatment and prejudice. UBCIC will find out more about our peoples’ experiences in this regard, and will be pushing for a comprehensive private sector response.”

Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President stated, “We stand with the Heiltsuk Nation, Maxwell and his granddaughter today to acknowledge that they were right to stand up for the rights of our people. Real change will come when this racism and profiling of Indigenous peoples in BC ends. While we push back on the colonial system, we also need to recognize that for those living under this system for more than 100 years, damage has been done in business circles and commerce by assumptions about us. UBCIC will push to understand how widespread this is in BC and will report out on whether other First Nations peoples have had similar experiences to Maxwell and his granddaughter.”

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, legal counsel, concluded “The human rights tribunal is ongoing in the Maxwell Johnson case, and we are scheduled for a hearing later this year. BMO has reached an important agreement here, and with this positive news, it would be important for Vancouver Police Board to follow their example and find a proper pathway for settlement of this complaint. UBCIC has extensive background experience in dealing with individual and systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples, especially in Vancouver. Chiefs and leaders in BC have consistently advocated for this to be exposed and to end. There is always potential for change, and real change, but it requires acknowledgement of individual and systemic racism, and must set forth a new path on training, oversight, and service delivery with serious efforts to end racism and discrimination against First Nations in police services and public safety. My client, UBCIC, has been clear throughout this process. UBCIC will be there all the way with Maxwell Johnson, his granddaughter, and the Heiltsuk Nation, in exposing the wrongdoing, advocating for change, and insisting that justice be achieved.”

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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)