



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

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BCAFN Condemns MLA Dallas Brodie's Stance Challenging the Presence of Unmarked Graves at Former Residential Schools

(X̱məθḵəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) –

The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), Regional Chief Terry Teegee and board member Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir condemn BC Conservative MLA Dallas Brodie's support to change the language in BC Law Society's training material to refer to "potential" burial sites at the former residential school in Kamloops and further denounce her attempt to exert political pressure to dismantle the histories and silence the voices of residential school survivors.

"Dallas Brodie's assertions are deeply harmful to the residential school survivors we see, love and support. Her denialism of our histories undermines the reality of the profound trauma and cultural loss experienced by First Nations. The intention of those who operated the residential schools was rooted in the brutal erasure of our languages and identities, inflicting lasting harm to our communities. Acknowledging the truth is necessary for healing and the reclamation of our languages, which are vital to our cultural heritages. Recognizing and revitalizing the living expressions of our identity is essential in combating denialism and celebrating our way of life," expressed Kúkpi7 Casimir.

"At this time, we have become acutely aware of how our choice of words and language significantly shapes societal attitudes, influences perceptions, fosters understanding and either promotes healing or perpetuates divisions among groups of people. It is critically important that we denounce hateful language, and political leaders must acknowledge the gravity of the traumas endured by First Nations communities. Leaders must engage with First Nations and respectfully honour the memories of those lost, fostering a dialogue that supports reconciliation and recognizes the lasting impact of residential schools on our communities," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

BCAFN rejects denialist-based claims and remarks regarding the residential school system perpetuated by the public or elected officials and calls on the BC Conservative Party leader, John Rustad, to immediately remove MLA Brodie from the BC Conservative Caucus and publicly denounce her statements made regarding unmarked graves and burial sites.

Canada's special interlocutor on unmarked graves and missing children, Kimberly Murray, reported last year that despite the "well-documented reality" of residential school deaths, some Canadians have made a concerted effort to attack the truths of survivors, Indigenous families and communities. She also noted that many people do not outright deny that residential schools existed and operated, but they misrepresent the intent, outcome and impacts of the system.

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