



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

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BCAFN Congratulates Commissioner Dr. Ronald E. Ignace and Directors on their Appointments to the Office of the Commission of Indigenous Languages

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory – June 16, 2021) The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) is pleased with the appointment of Dr. Ronald E. Ignace, former Chief of the Skeetchestn Indian Band, to the new Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, alongside Directors Georgina Liberty, Joan Greyeyes, and Robert Watt.

“It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Commissioner Dr. Ronald E. Ignace on his appointment to the inaugural Office of the Commission of Indigenous Languages,” said Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “Our languages are an integral part of our cultures, histories, and future of our Nations. The creation of this Office is a promising step toward ensuring Indigenous languages are reclaimed, revitalized, and protected for years to come.”

Dr. Ignace’s accomplishments include prominent political positions as elected Chief of the Skeetchestn Indian Band for more than 30 years and co-chair of the Assembly of First Nations' Chiefs Committee on Languages. Dr. Ignace completed a Ph.D. in Anthropology at Simon Fraser University with a dissertation on Secwepemc oral history. He has also written and co-written several articles and book chapters on Secwepemc history, ethnobotany, and language and culture.

Despite being a survivor of Kamloops Indian Residential School, Ignace is a fluent Secwepemctsin speaker and holds more than sixty years of Secwepemc traditional knowledge and experience living and working on the land.

“*The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* affirms our right to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit Indigenous languages to future generations. I look forward to the efforts of this Office to overcome over a century of cultural destruction and assimilation by restoring and strengthening our traditional languages and cultures,” further stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 15 called on the Canadian government to appoint an Indigenous Languages Commissioner, in consultation with Indigenous groups. The BCAFN is pleased to see some advancement to the Calls to Action, especially the passing of Bill C-15 – *An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*. The next step will see Indigenous peoples working with the federal government to develop an Action Plan to achieve the Declaration’s objectives.

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