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Sylx Okanagan Nation Chiefs Executive Council Stands in Solidarity with Penticton Indian Band, Condemns Harmful MLA Statements on First Nations Sovereignty

snpnk'tn, sylx Okanagan Territory/Penticton, BC - The sylx Okanagan Nation Chiefs Executive Council expresses unwavering support for the Penticton Indian Band (PIB) and its leadership in the wake of recent statements made by MLAs Tara Armstrong, Jordan Kealy, and Dallas Brodie. These statements dangerously mischaracterize First Nations sovereignty, equating it with unrelated political issues and perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

The Penticton Indian Band, a member community of the sylx Okanagan Nation, has rightly condemned these remarks, emphasizing that First Nations sovereignty is not a threat—it is a constitutionally-protected right affirmed by Canadian and international law; simply put- this is the legal reality and historical facts that are not up for political debate or opinion. In response to the PIB's call for resignation, MLAs Armstrong and Brodie doubled down on their claims, referring to First Nations sovereignty and reconciliation efforts as an 'unfounded sovereignty claim' and a 'reconciliation industry' that has led to 'zero accountability and disastrous results'.

The sylx Okanagan Nation Chiefs Executive Council echoes the PIB's call for the immediate resignation of the MLAs involved. Such rhetoric undermines the principles of reconciliation and demonstrates systemic racism incompatible with public office. This kind of divisive rhetoric not only perpetuates harmful stereotypes and misinformation about First Nations peoples, but it also erodes the trust, unity, and shared future that reconciliation seeks to build. When elected officials publicly question the legitimacy of First Nations rights and self-determination, it sows division and fear, fostering resentment instead of understanding. Such actions harm not only First Nations communities who are working to reclaim and exercise their inherent rights, but also non-First Nations citizens who benefit from strong, respectful relationships grounded in mutual recognition and cooperation.

True reconciliation creates a more just, inclusive, and sustainable society for everyone in British Columbia. Reconciliation can only move forward through mutual respect and recognition—of the distinct rights, governance systems, and histories of First Nations peoples, and of our shared responsibilities to live together in a fair and just society. Respect is not a favour—it is a foundation for peace, equity, and progress. Recognition means acknowledging that First Nations have never relinquished their land, laws, or responsibilities, and that these must be meaningfully reflected in how decisions are made today.

Chief Greg Gabriel, Penticton Indian Band, stated that, “Our Title and Rights are not up for debate, nor are they a political talking point. They are recognized in the Constitution and upheld by the courts of this country. To suggest otherwise, or to reduce the work of reconciliation to a so-called ‘industry,’ is deeply offensive and shows a fundamental misunderstanding of Canada’s legal and moral obligations to First Nations Peoples. We call on all elected officials to speak responsibly and to uphold the values of truth, respect, and reconciliation.”

Chief Clarence Louie, Chair of the sylx Okanagan Nation, added that, “The comments made by these MLAs show exactly why reconciliation is still a long way off. Reconciliation is not about opinions—it’s about

recognizing First Nations Peoples' inherent rights, our laws, and our jurisdiction over our lands. Our people have lived here since time immemorial. We're not going anywhere. If politicians can't respect that, they have no place in public office. The syilx Okanagan Nation stands behind PIB leadership, and we will continue to assert our sovereignty in our territory."

We reaffirm our commitment to upholding our ancestral jurisdiction and responsibilities. We urge all British Columbians to reject divisive rhetoric and to join in genuine reconciliation and mutual respect.

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The syilx Okanagan Nation Chiefs Executive Council is the governing body of the syilx Okanagan Nation. It leads collective efforts to uphold, advance, and defend Title and Rights, support Nationhood, and ensure the well-being of Syilx communities and future generations across the territory.

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[About the syilx Okanagan Nation Chiefs Executive Council](#)

