



UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

2026-08-09

OPEN LETTER: Wildfires and Floods are Devastating Communities; Canada and Alberta Must Stop Expanding the Fossil Fuel Industry and Respect First Nations Rights

Dear Prime Minister Carney and Premier Smith:

Today, on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) calls on the governments of Canada and Alberta to immediately halt efforts to advance the proposed West Coast Oil Pipeline. This proposal threatens both the inherent rights of First Nations and accelerates the expansion of the fossil fuel industry at a time when communities across the country are already experiencing devastating climate disasters. Canada cannot claim to respect Indigenous rights while ignoring free, prior and informed consent, nor can it claim climate leadership while approving infrastructure designed to expand oil production. This day recognizes the rights, cultures, knowledge, and enduring contributions of Indigenous Peoples around the world, but it must also be a day of accountability. Governments cannot celebrate Indigenous Peoples while making decisions about our lands and waters without us.

The UBCIC Chiefs Council is reaffirming opposition to a new oil pipeline and tanker projects transporting oil to and through Canada's Pacific Coast of B.C. Through resolution 2026-34 *Opposition to Oil Pipeline Proposals to the Pacific Coast*, the UBCIC Chiefs Council expresses alarm about the climate impacts of new oil pipelines and rejects efforts to characterize pipeline expansion as being in the national interest where First Nations title, rights, jurisdiction, and environmental protection would be undermined. Additional pipeline and tanker traffic would expose First Nations lands, waters, marine ecosystems, cultures, economies, and ways of life to unacceptable risks from oil spills, environmental degradation, and accelerating climate change.

Canada and Alberta's accelerated effort to have the proposed West Coast Oil Pipeline designated as a project of national interest does not displace their legal obligations to First Nations. Such a designation may create an expedited federal approval process, but it does not override First Nations' inherent, human, and constitutionally protected title and rights, laws, jurisdiction, and responsibilities over their lands, waters, territories, and resources. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* affirms that states must consult and cooperate in good faith with Indigenous Peoples through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before approving projects affecting their lands, territories, and resources.

Canada and Alberta claim that their engagement is early and meaningful, but they have already developed a project concept and corridor, submitted the proposal, named prospective development partners, established an October 1 target, and begun publicly promoting the project's economic case. Consultation cannot be meaningful

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if First Nations are invited only to discuss how a predetermined project will proceed. Nor can equity ownership, loan guarantees, revenue-sharing, employment, or other proposed benefits be treated as substitutes for consent. Every First Nation has the right to determine its own future under its own laws and governance. At the same time, the destructive and disastrous consequences of expanding fossil fuel production extend far beyond any single territory. Greenhouse gas emissions do not recognize territorial boundaries, they contribute to a climate crisis that affects every First Nation, every community, and future generations alike. From catastrophic wildfires to destructive floods and rising seas, the impacts of climate change are already being felt across this country. Every new fossil fuel project deepens that crisis.

UBCIC calls on Canada and Alberta to halt any decision to list the West Coast Oil Pipeline as a project of national interest unless and until they have consulted and cooperated in good faith with the First Nations concerned in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent. Canada and Alberta must respect the decisions of First Nations that withhold consent and ensure that any assessment fully addresses cumulative effects, oil-spill and marine-shipping risks, impacts to lands, waters, salmon, and other species, and the destructive and disastrous climate consequences of the oil production growth required to support the pipeline. They must establish a transparent and adequately resourced process in which every affected First Nation participates through its own representative institutions and has the time and capacity to apply its laws and make its own decision.

We have copied Premier Eby because British Columbia also has legal obligations to uphold First Nations' title and rights and implement the *United Nations Declaration* through the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Canada, Alberta, and British Columbia must choose whether they will stand with Indigenous Peoples and future generations or continue expanding the fossil fuel industry that is driving the climate emergency. Canadians are witnessing increasingly destructive wildfires, catastrophic flooding, extreme heat, and other climate disasters with growing frequency. Governments cannot respond to these disasters while simultaneously approving infrastructure designed to increase fossil fuel extraction and greenhouse gas emissions. Respect for First Nations' free, prior and informed consent and meaningful climate action are not competing priorities, they are inseparable obligations.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

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