

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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FNLC Celebrates the 19th Anniversary, Urges Full Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Revitalize Reconciliation, Justice and True Partnership

(X̱wməθkʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) On the 19th anniversary of the adoption of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (the UN Declaration) as a global human rights standard, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) celebrates commitments and progress toward strengthening First Nations' self-determination by supporting First Nations' governance and decision-making autonomy within their Nations and territories.

In an increasingly uncertain political and economic landscape, the implementation of the *UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* risks being compromised by insufficient political commitment, entrenched colonial legal systems, ongoing environmental exploitation, resource shortages, and superficial interpretation instead of authentic transformation.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee states, "Under the framework of the *Declaration Act* (2019) in British Columbia, First Nations have intensified their pursuit of economic, social and cultural development. First Nations' rights to lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned or used for millennia are key to cultural survival and environmental sustainability. By embracing and empowering the *Declaration Act*, First Nations and all British Columbians benefit from efforts to correct historical wrongs and advance reconciliation, as it guides governments and institutions in eliminating discrimination and promoting equality. We must continue to commit to moving forward together to ensure thriving and healthy communities."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, states, "Governments cannot claim to uphold the UN Declaration while advancing a West Coast oil pipeline through First Nations' territories without their free, prior and informed consent. First Nations have inherent and sacred responsibilities to care for our lands and waters for future generations, and the UN Declaration affirms our right to determine how our territories and resources are used and protected. Economic expediency cannot override First Nations title and rights or substitute consultation for consent. Where consent is not given, governments must respect that decision."

Robert Phillips added, "UNDRIP, as well as supporting provincial and federal legislation, should be embraced and not be used as political footballs in partisan politics. Our collective challenge remains turning words and commitments into concrete actions – to translate them into practical actions that lead to actual, tangible benefits on the ground within our communities. This involves meaningful and lasting changes to eliminate discriminatory domestic laws, policies and practices, seeking to support First Nations to fully exercise the right to self-determination and to expose and counter any misguided and narrow interpretations of the UN Declaration that serve to



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create fear, misunderstanding and conflict where there should be collaboration, constructive dialogue and joint progress.”

It is imperative that governments and institutions operate within the UN Declaration framework to build meaningful partnerships, uphold First Nations' sovereignty, and drive deep, systemic and lasting change.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). <https://www.fnlc.ca/>

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