



UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

News Release

October 1, 2026

UBCIC Rejects “National Interest” Designation for Toxic West Coast Oil “Pacific Link” Pipeline

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – October 1, 2026) Today, the federal government announced designation of the West Coast Oil “Pacific Link” Pipeline (Pacific Link pipeline) as a project of national interest, despite an incomplete consultation process that ignored First Nations inherent and constitutionally protected title and rights, and that ignored the dangerous impacts of increased fossil fuel extraction and transmission. The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) reiterates that First Nations’ title and rights cannot be set aside to meet a political timeline, and that opposition from affected Nations must be respected.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated “We demand that the legal principle of ‘free, prior, informed consent’ enshrined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* be fully engaged in ‘all’ fast-tracked projects sponsored by the Major Projects Office pursuant to the so-called *Build Canada Act*. The Pacific Link pipeline is unique in that it has tossed aside the fundamental pillars of our relationship in terms of respect, in terms of shared communication, and taking up lands in our territories without any form of credible consultation. We all know that this is a template approach for many other projects to come if it goes as smoothly as Canada hopes. We have a duty and an obligation to protect our rights to the fullest extent of the law and we have every intention of doing that. This is not a cake walk, this is not a ‘gimme’, this will be hard-fought in the court rooms, and if necessary, with boots on the ground.”

Heiltsuk ƛáwázit Chief Marilyn Slett, UBCIC Secretary-Treasurer, stated, “At the heart of our fight is keeping our coast super tanker free and protected from jeopardizing our way of life, economy and future. Whether the tankers travel south or north it’s all the same. They threaten the health of our ocean and an oil spill is devastating to our communities. Heiltsuk knows this first hand - 10 years after the Nathan E Stewart fuel spill that impacted our marine bread-basket, Heiltsuk is still fighting for justice.”

Chief Dan Manuel, Upper Nicola Indian Band, commented, “We have never surrendered or ceded our lands, but we are faced with the ongoing impacts of these decisions every day. We are

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forced into a legal system that is part of the colonial framework to protect our rights in courts that we never agreed to and never accepted. Government needs to recognize and respect that First Nations have a place in the legislative framework and in decision-making in this country. If we continue to let governments have control, we will continue to bear the impacts while receiving the least from the outcomes.”

At the recent 58th Annual General Assembly, the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 2026-40, calling on the federal and provincial governments, in full partnership with First Nations, to immediately halt the advancement of all major resource projects in B.C. pending a complete, transparent, and independent review of all outstanding and backlogged historical claims, claims in negotiations – including land back negotiations – and claims in research and development across the province. The UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly also passed Resolution 2026-46, which firmly rejects the designation of the West Coast Oil (Pacific Link) Pipeline, as a project of national interest, and rejects the designation of any other project under the *Building Canada Act*, where such projects would undermine First Nations inherent, human, and constitutionally protected title and rights and jurisdiction, environmental protection, and the authority of affected First Nations to determine priorities for their territories and waters, unless and until meaningful consultation consistent with the honour of the Crown and the minimum standards described above has been carried out.

Katisha Paul, UBCIC Women’s representative, stated, “Whose national interest is this designation for? We have seen major projects move forward with promises of economic benefits for our communities, but we have to ask whether those benefits have actually been realized, and what the impacts to our way of life are. These projects are harming our people and our living relatives, and First Nations should not be expected to carry those impacts in the name of someone else’s national interest.”

“Moving another million barrels of oil across major salmon rivers and through salmon migration routes in the Salish Sea could have devastating impacts on our inherent title and fishing rights,” said **Chief Dalton Silver, Semá:th First Nation**. “Prime Minister Carney needs to understand that today’s pre-approval of a new crude oil pipeline and tankers project without a full assessment of the risks of a rupture or oil spill, and without the consent of impacted Nations, is both unwise and unlawful.”

“A ‘national interest’ designation cannot override First Nations’ inherent and constitutionally protected title and rights,” concluded **Gitxaala Chief Councillor Linda Innes, UBCIC Vice-President**. “UBCIC warns that pre-approving the project without meaningful consultation and the free, prior and informed consent of affected First Nations would be inconsistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and vulnerable to legal challenge. First

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Nations must have sufficient information, time and resources to assess the proposal through their own laws and decision-making processes, including the option not to proceed.”

UBCIC opposes advancing the pipeline and associated tanker traffic at the expense of First Nations’ territories, livelihoods, and future generations. The risks of spills, harm to watersheds and marine ecosystems, and increased fossil fuel production require comprehensive review before decisions are made. Claims of economic urgency cannot justify proceeding without a thorough assessment of the project’s cumulative environmental, climate, cultural, and human rights impacts.

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UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

For more information, please visit www.ubcic.bc.ca

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