

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## Statement

April 20, 2023

### Legalized but Still Excluded; FNLC Calls for Change to Cannabis Laws

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) In 2018, cannabis was legalized without meaningful engagement or consultation with First Nations. As people gather on April 20<sup>th</sup> to engage in further advocacy around cannabis, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) calls on the governments of British Columbia and Canada to align the cannabis legal framework with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and support First Nations fulsome participation in the cannabis economy.

First Nations have inherent rights and jurisdiction to govern the cultivation, processing, sale, and consumption of cannabis in their territories. Despite persistent advocacy, First Nations distinct rights and unique needs were ignored by colonial governments during the legalization of cannabis. Five years later, Canada's legislative framework for cannabis still does not provide appropriate avenues for coordination between jurisdictions or appropriate fiscal relationships that reflect the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction over cannabis. First Nations business also continue to be challenged by excessive taxation and onerous regulations.

While 4/20 is a time of celebrating progress and liberty for many, the lack of viable pathways forward on these issues has created barriers for First Nations communities to access the benefits of legalization and has caused additional challenges for ensuring community health and safety.

The FNLC is calling for the issues of jurisdiction, economic development, taxation, revenue sharing, and health and safety for First Nations to be meaningfully addressed in amendments to the *Cannabis Act* in partnership with First Nations; and for the province of BC to continue to coordinate and consult with First Nations to implement commitments within the Declaration Act Action Plan, including the alignment of cannabis laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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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).*

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