

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

September 24, 2025

First Nations Leadership Council Urges Ongoing Engagement and Support on Transformation of the Heritage Conservation Act

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is reaffirming its strong support for updating the *Heritage Conservation Act* (HCA), a long-overdue modernization of outdated legislation that has not been substantively amended since 1996.

Robert Phillips, First Nations Summit Political Executive and FNLC representative on the Joint Working Group on First Nations Heritage Conservation (JWGFNHC), stated “We are only at the beginning of a long legislative process that began with Phase 1 engagements in 2022. We have recently entered Phase 3 — moving from policy intentions into getting input from First Nations, local governments, and stakeholders on draft legislative proposals based on what we’ve heard through past engagement in Phases 1 and 2. The door is wide open for anyone to provide input at this critical time, before the Request for Legislation, and then the legislation itself, is drafted. We cannot allow fearmongering to derail a process that will deliver better protection, more transparency, and faster decisions for everyone.”

Chief Jerry Jack, BCAFN Board Director, stated “The current HCA reflects colonial notions of ‘heritage’ that ignore and erase First Nations cultural heritage and fail to protect what is most sacred to our peoples. The regulatory framework provided for in the HCA prevents First Nations from protecting our sacred sites, the sanctity of our belongings and the remains of our ancestors in accordance with our traditional laws and customs. The transformation process is not just an update — it is an essential step to dismantle systemic discrimination in provincial law, uphold First Nations’ inherent rights and jurisdiction, and protect heritage for all British Columbians.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President concluded, “For far too long, First Nations’ sacred sites, cultural heritage, and even our ancestors’ remains have been left unprotected under provincial law. According to section 3 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and Article 19 of the UN Declaration, the Province must work with First Nations to make legislative changes that affect us. This is exactly what is happening. Let me be clear: protecting First Nations heritage strengthens British Columbia’s heritage. We will not allow misinformation or political opportunism to undermine this work. We urge all British Columbians to stand with us in protecting what is sacred.”

The FNLC underscores that engagement on the HCATP is still underway, and broad input is vital to shaping new legislation. Feedback from First Nations, local governments, stakeholders, and the public will directly inform the Province’s next steps. An [online survey](#) is currently open and will close at 4:00 p.m. on October 1, 2025.

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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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