

# First Nations Summit

May 2, 2017

Commentary, The Vancouver Sun  
#1 – 200 Granville Street  
Vancouver BC V6C 3N3

## UN Declaration should be embraced not feared

**Re: Vaughn Palmer - Horgan's all in on changing relationship with First Nations – April 28, 2017**

Last week, Indigenous Peoples and national governments from around the world met at the United Nations in New York to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 13, 2007 adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration). A year ago, when the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues met, Canada's Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs announced Canada's full endorsement of the Declaration, without reservation and committed to working collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples to fully implement the Declaration. This is an international commitment that obligates all levels of government in Canada to follow suit, and thus why, Indigenous peoples across Canada are looking to provincial governments to make similar commitments, including here in BC.

The Declaration is not something to be feared, as Vaughn Palmer implies in his April 28<sup>th</sup> column. The Declaration is about recognizing and supporting the exercise of Indigenous Peoples inherent right to self-determination, it is intended to be a key instrument of collaboration between Indigenous peoples and governments, industry and citizens, it is not an instrument of obstruction. The Declaration sets out a concrete roadmap to begin addressing the lasting harms of past human rights abuses and violations and prevents such repetition in the present and future. This is one reason among many that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) called on federal and other governments to adopt the Declaration as "the framework for reconciliation."

The TRC called for a coordinated and collaborative approach to implementation through a national action plan developed with Indigenous Peoples. The commitment to develop action plans must be realized at both the federal and provincial level. We commend John Horgan and the NDP for realizing the significance and importance of this important human rights instrument and making implementation of the UN Declaration a key cog in their 2017 election platform. Regardless of the outcome on May 9<sup>th</sup>, Indigenous peoples in BC will be looking to the new government to work with us, in the spirit of reconciliation, towards implementation of the Declaration.

**Grand Chief Edward John** is a member of the Executive of the First Nations Summit. He participated in the development of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and is a former North American Representative to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

