



BACKGROUND

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
First Nations Leadership Council

What people are saying about the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

Adam Olsen, MLA for Saanich North and the Islands and Member of Tsartlip First Nation -

"The legislation introduced today is the result of decades of work and advocacy from Indigenous leaders in Canada. I raise my hands to them. We are now on a path of cooperation and collaboration unlike we have seen in the history of British Columbia. It is a path that creates certainty by avoiding the conflict that we face today. I am proud to be part of this Parliament as we take this historic step recognizing the fundamental human rights of Indigenous peoples."

Gitxsan Chief Glen Williams -

"My grandfather a Gitxsan high chief Lelt said to me in the 80s, 'you watch one day, our Gitxsan way of life, our traditional laws and *lax yip* (territories) will be enshrined in the white man's laws (non-indigenous laws). It will be a small faint light then it will begin to glow and then it will glitter in their supreme law'. With B.C. legislating the UN Declaration, it will signal and provide opportunities for meaningful coexistence, true redress to be recognized as the proper rights holders, partnerships on the *lax yip* to jointly manage, plan and share the economic fruits."

Greg D'Avignon, President and CEO, Business Council of British Columbia -

"The Business Council of British Columbia membership is optimistic for the long-term potential of B.C.'s UNDRIP legislation to advance meaningful reconciliation. In the spirit of collaboration, the implementation of the legislation must include engagement with business and their Indigenous partners and communities. Together we can collectively inform the work ahead building on the experience and success of the nearly 500 agreements formed over the last two decades between business and Indigenous peoples, many of which incorporate UNDRIP principles. Successful implementation will also require government support for nation building and capacity building to enable Indigenous peoples' full participation in shared decision-making processes, while creating the needed clarity and greater certainty for businesses, investors and the people of B.C. as we pursue opportunity and prosperity together."

Maja Tait, President, Union of B.C. Municipalities -

"The Union of B.C. Municipalities welcomes legislation establishing a framework for reconciliation in British Columbia. Our membership supports the ongoing work of reconciliation both locally and provincially. We also recognize the need for all orders of government to be directly involved in collaborative processes when there are direct jurisdictional considerations. We look forward to reviewing the legislation and ascertaining the requirement for local government consultation and engaging with all parties to support this work."



Kendra Johnston, President and CEO, Association for Mineral Exploration BC. -

"Mineral explorers in B.C. are leaders in reconciliation, with many companies already employing practices that are aligned with the principles of UNDRIP. As one of the largest private sector employers of Indigenous peoples in Canada, we are supportive of our First Nation partners and encourage fostering respectful relationships through early engagement. We look forward to working with government and Indigenous leaders on the implementation of UNDRIP principles to ensure clarity and certainty for all British Columbians."

Khelsilem, Squamish Nation -

"Indigenous peoples' struggle for Canadian governments to affirm and ratify Indigenous rights has been long and painful. But the new legislation on the rights of Indigenous peoples is a moment in our generation where we work together to create meaningful impact for all our communities. This is a historic moment in Canada brought together by generations of work."

Geoff Plant, former Attorney General of British Columbia and Minister responsible for Treaty Negotiations (2001 to 2005) -

"B.C.'s *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* is a profoundly important step on the road to reconciliation in BC. It's both a strong affirmation of indigenous rights and a framework for ensuring that the work of making these rights meaningful 'on the ground' is done collaboratively, responsibly and transparently. I congratulate the government and everyone else who helped bring this initiative to fruition."

Clara Morin Dal Col, President, Métis Nation British Columbia -

"The Métis Nation B.C. is pleased this government is fulfilling its commitment to introduce legislation implementing UNDRIP into provincial laws and policies. Our 20,000 citizens now look forward to seeing that commitment to UNDRIP demonstrated in the legislation itself, including formal recognition of our constitutional rights under Section 35."

Susannah Pierce, Director Corporate Affairs, LNG Canada -

"LNG Canada supports the government's effort to achieve reconciliation through the implementation of legislation in support of UNDRIP. LNG Canada welcomes legislation that will enhance transparency, creates greater certainty and ultimately delivers shared prosperity for indigenous communities in the province."

David Kiemele, Managing Director, Cermaq -

"UNDRIP means many things; justice, equality, good governance, good faith and a rights-based approach. As a business in Canada, Cermaq has already adopted UNDRIP as a reconciliation framework and is applying it in our corporate policy. In Canada, there continues to be a need for sustainable development and the positive impact that can have in small rural and coastal communities. In Cermaq we have a very public commitment to respecting human rights, diversity and the opportunity for personal and community prosperity. Relationships must be healed and although we are still learning as a company, our hearts are fully committed."



Chief Robert Joseph, Ambassador, Reconciliation Canada -

“The provincial government should be applauded for its extraordinary courage for taking this giant step for our society. This is one of the most significant human rights milestones achieved for Indigenous peoples by any government in the world. B.C. has set a legislative precedent that can guide the way forward for all provinces across this country as well as at the federal level for meaningful reconciliation and engagement.”

Maria Dobrinskaya, BC Director, Broadbent Institute -

“This important bill takes a significant step forward in continuing to build upon the recognition and affirmation of Indigenous rights as outlined in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. The respectful, balanced, process-oriented approach in this legislation will provide certainty and opportunity in our province, to the benefit of all British Columbians.”

Laird Cronk, President, BC Federation of Labour -

“B.C.’s labour movement - and the half-a-million workers our affiliates represent in every corner of this province - know that Indigenous rights are human rights. For too long, those rights have been denied, forcing First Nations and communities into conflict. With the UN Declaration as its framework, this Bill enables Indigenous communities to take on meaningful roles in decision-making and provides a just and equitable path for economic development that benefits all workers and communities in B.C.”

Josie Osborne, Mayor, District of Tofino -

“All my experiences working in Indigenous communities and now being a leader in my own rural community confirm that the only path forward to prosperity and mutual benefit is one on which we walk together at every level – as individuals, as communities, and as governments. Codifying this commitment and providing a framework through legislation that implements the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is something I strongly believe in.”

Kennedy Stewart, Mayor, City of Vancouver -

“This legislation is an important step forward to a brighter future for the province and for indigenous peoples. As a City of Reconciliation, Vancouver has been working to strengthen relationships between the municipality, local First Nations and urban Indigenous peoples. The province’s legislation will provide a supportive context for that work.”

Jennifer Preston, Indigenous Rights Coordinator, Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers) -

“Creating a legislative framework in British Columbia for the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is vitally important for achieving reconciliation and safeguarding human rights. Supporting this effort is critical to ensuring Indigenous peoples’ rights are respected, as we move away from the legacy of colonization into a new reality.”



Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Aki-kwe, professor of law and director, Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, University of British Columbia -

“The new legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration in B.C. is an historic and fulsome response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It brings clarity, stability and respect for the human rights of Indigenous peoples. I applaud this step and believe it will mark a positive turning point for justice and human rights in British Columbia.”

Charlene Higgins, CEO, First Nations Forestry Council -

“This historic legislation will provide Indigenous governments and organizations like ours with a much-needed tool to engage with the Province to make decisions together as partners that share a common interest in finding innovative approaches to sustainably manage our natural resources.”

Santa Ono, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of British Columbia -

“UBC is one of the first universities to explicitly express support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and since Indigenous engagement is one of our top strategic priorities, we welcome legislative guidance on how to implement the UN Declaration, in practice.”

Dr. Roshan Danesh - Strategic Advisor on Reconciliation and conflict resolution to First Nations, governments, industry, international organizations and the United Nations -

“This legislation does exactly what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action say must be done – adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a ‘framework for reconciliation’. Through the legislation we will gain more coherence in how government and First Nations act, partner, and invest in the work of reconciliation – and see increasingly tangible progress built through co-operation.”