



STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
2019IRR0061-002283
Nov. 26, 2019

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
First Nations Leadership Council

Joint statement on B.C. Indigenous human rights legislation passing unanimously

VICTORIA - Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations; Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit; Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Union of BC Indian Chiefs; and Adam Olsen, MLA for Saanich North and the Islands and member of Tsartlip First Nation, have issued the following statement:

"Today, we have made history. British Columbia is the first province in Canada to enshrine the human rights of Indigenous peoples in law. Bill 41, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples act, passed unanimously on Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2019.

"The legislation establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the foundational framework for reconciliation in B.C., as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The provincial government developed Bill 41 in collaboration with the First Nations Leadership Council, which was acting on the direction of First Nations leaders throughout the province. A commitment to adopting the Declaration is a component of the Confidence and Supply Agreement between the B.C. government and the BC Green Party caucus.

"This legislation advances a path forward to true reconciliation for all of us in B.C. that will uphold Indigenous rights and create stronger communities, stable jobs and economic growth.

"It is time we recognize and safeguard Indigenous peoples' human rights, so that we may finally move away from conflict, drawn-out court cases and uncertainty, and move forward with collaboration and respect. Ensuring that Indigenous peoples are part of the policy-making and decision-making processes that affect them, their families and their territories is how we will create more certainty and opportunity for Indigenous peoples, B.C. businesses, communities and families everywhere.

"Any future changes to bring provincial laws into harmony with the UN Declaration will be done in consultation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples, with opportunities for engagement with local governments and stakeholders such as business and industry. Changes won't happen overnight - this will be a gradual, step-by-step process over time.

"The development of an action plan - in collaboration with Indigenous peoples - with regular reporting to monitor progress will provide a transparent and accountable path forward on reconciliation in B.C.

"Working together, we have made significant progress in the past two years and we have seen critical advancements with affordable housing, child welfare, language revitalization and revenue sharing. This legislation will help us build upon this progress and make a real, meaningful difference in the lives of Indigenous families and everyone in B.C."

Media contacts:

Sarah Plank
Ministry of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation
250 208-9621

Colin Braker
First Nations Summit
604 328-4094

Jaime Sanchez
BC Assembly of First Nations
250 713-1129

Ellena Neel
Union of BC Indian Chiefs
778 866-0548