

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan Released on Earth Day

(Xwməθkwəy' əm (Musqueam), Skwx̱ wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliiwətał (Tseil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – April 22, 2022). The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is pleased to announce the release of the [BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) (the Strategy), timed to celebrate and honour Earth Day.

We are experiencing record-setting summer and winter temperatures, warming and rising oceans, droughts, wildfires, damaging storms, floods, and landslides, among other impacts. First Nations and our lands are disproportionately impacted. In recognition of the urgency and the need for immediate action, First Nations leadership in BC mandated the FNLC to develop a First Nations-led Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

“Humanity and Mother Earth are suffering the consequences of human behaviour. Our ancestral lands, communities, and cultural identity depend on immediate climate action,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee of the BC Assembly of First Nations. “The response from the provincial and federal governments is inadequate and insufficient to address the climate emergency and time is running out for incremental or gradual transitions. We have surpassed the point of no return as the changes to the global climate system are resulting in unbearable emergencies; we cannot recover quickly enough. Governments are also failing to adequately engage and co-develop climate actions with First Nations across the province, so First Nations had to prepare our own climate strategy to fight the climate crisis.”

The Strategy presents a vision, guiding principles, and priorities for climate action articulated by leadership and community members from across the province, and is grounded in a First Nations climate lens. The Strategy focuses on ensuring that First Nations’ inherent title, rights and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed in climate change planning and response as an essential building block for climate action. Four priority pathways guide the Strategy: *Inherent Title and Rights; Capacity and Leadership; Land and Water Protection; and Climate Response and Preparedness.*

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs stated, “Our very existence as Indigenous peoples and our connection to our lands and culture are under threat. Nothing short of transformative societal change can prevent the worst of what will happen to communities everywhere if governments around the world continue to enable the driving forces behind the climate crisis. The Strategy is unique because it represents a vision of a newly restored relationship to the Earth that privileges the health and stability of the lands and waters within our territories over the overexploitation of resources. Governments must recognize that this fight cannot be won without solving the inequities that we face daily.”



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In its entirety, the Strategy contains 27 themes, 63 objectives, and 143 strategic actions, plus a series of recommendations for implementation. The Strategy is accompanied by an [Executive Summary](#) and [20 Urgent Calls for Climate Action](#) which draw on overlapping priority areas that are immediate concerns for First Nations across the province.

Chief Lydia Hwitsum of the First Nations Summit Political Executive added, “The Strategy showcases First Nations’ priorities in climate planning. Our leadership is evident in many examples across the province, and the Strategy provides an opportunity for governments to ensure the protection and stability of the Earth for generations to come. The climate emergency requires our collaborative efforts including the full recognition of the inherent rights, title and jurisdiction of First Nations.”

Earth Day is an opportunity to celebrate the connections and responsibilities that First Nations have to our lands, and to recognize that our leadership is essential to the collective efforts to pass on a livable world to our grandchildren. The FNLC calls on the provincial and federal governments to meaningfully uphold their commitments towards reconciliation and to support First Nations in their implementation efforts of the Strategy.

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), the First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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