

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

June 16, 2022

### One Year After UN Declaration Act Passed, FNLC Calls for Faster Progress and Emergency Interim Implementation Plan

(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is concerned with a lack of progress since Canada passed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* one year ago today, which commits the federal government to the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration).

The FNLC welcomed this critical legislation which builds off the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's recognition that the UN Declaration is *the* framework for reconciliation, and demands Canada jointly develop an emergency interim implementation plan given the lack of action since the legislation was passed.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated, "One year ago, after years of advocacy by former MP Romeo Saganash, federal legislation to implement the UN Declaration was passed. A year later, very little progress has been made on an Action Plan or the alignment of the laws of Canada with the requirements of the UN Declaration. First Nations are continuing to face obstacles to get out from under Canadian government control over our lives due to the imposed *Indian Act*, and areas long overdue for reform, like Canada's problematic specific claims policies, remain stagnant and stuck in old processes that require First Nations to wait decades for resolution. The Chiefs expect more concrete measures, and for the UN Declaration to mean a serious shift to recognition of the inherent Rights of Indigenous peoples, through the abolition and replacement of federal policies and approaches mired in racism, denial and delay."

"The past year has been a difficult one for First Nations in BC as we consider the profound impact of COVID-19, the losses of cherished members of our Nations and communities, and the struggle we faced trying to keep our people safe when the resources provided, such as safe housing, and economic supports, were so minimal or non-existent," stated Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Task Group. "Canada needs to step up and do better, especially in addressing racism in health care, and social services. We expected changes to major legislation, like the *Canada Health Act*, to protect our peoples from racism and discrimination in health care, and having just experienced two years of sustained challenges in relation to health, it is shocking that even the UN Declaration and its clear provisions addressing the requirement to end racism and discrimination have not had the intended impact because Government has failed to act."

BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee concluded, "The UN Declaration is an international instrument that must shape a new approach for First Nations. In passing the UN Declaration Act, Canada wrote in the law that the "implementation of the Declaration can contribute to supporting sustainable development and responding to growing concerns relating to climate change and its impacts on Indigenous peoples." In the past year, First Nations in BC have seen their entire villages wiped out by fires and floods, and the impacts of climate change continue to imperil our existence. Yet we have no federal Indigenous Climate Strategy based on human rights and developed with the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations. Our salmon, forests and sacred territories and waters need urgent action to



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be protected for future generations. Finally, we call on Canada to immediately work on an emergency interim implementation plan for this legislation, because we do not have any time to waste.”

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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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