

First Nations Summit

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STATEMENT

First Nations Summit statement on 15th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), Vancouver, British Columbia – The adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (the UN Declaration) fifteen years ago today – on September 13, 2007 - was a historic achievement realized through the hard work and commitment of Indigenous Peoples around the world, over a span of two decades, working collectively to advance international Indigenous human rights.

In BC, we have been buoyed by the passage of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) by the BC Legislature in 2019 and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDRIPA) by Federal Parliament in 2021. These provincial and federal commitments to reconstruct the relationship with Indigenous Peoples is significant. The *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* must be a key component to a solid foundation to a revised and strengthened relationship between governments and First Nations Governments.

Our collective challenge remains turning words and commitments into concrete action – to translate them into practical actions that lead to actual, tangible benefits on the ground within our communities. This involves meaningful and lasting changes to eliminate discriminatory domestic laws, policies and practices, seeking to support Indigenous Peoples to fully exercise the right to self-determination and to expose and counter any narrow interpretations of the UN Declaration that serve to create fear, misunderstanding and conflict where there should be collaboration, constructive dialogue and joint progress.

While there continues to be challenges, we acknowledge the significant efforts of the provincial government to adopt an approach to implementation that establishes genuine partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and organizations. Our expectation remains that full collaboration, consistent with the 46 articles of the UN Declaration, is the most productive and successful route to effecting positive change through implementation. Mutual efforts based on the principles of cooperation, partnership, and co-development, is the route to a lasting path of reconciliation. The federal government must also work with BC First Nations to take similar steps to bring federal laws, programs and initiatives into alignment with the UN Declaration.

Further, to truly accomplish full implementation of the UN Declaration, we require strong, bold and steadfast commitment by leadership at all levels within the federal and provincial bureaucracies and within our communities.

The last 150 years, a time of “cultural genocide” for Indigenous peoples in this country, have not served us well. We must seize the continuing and historic opportunities before us and work together in partnership to achieve constructive and long-lasting solutions on a collective path to reconciliation.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also an NGO in Special Consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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