
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
First Nations Leadership Council

B.C., First Nations leaders gather to advance relationships

X̱MƏΘḴƏY̱ƏM (MUSQUEAM), SḴW̱X̱W̱Ú7MESH (SQUAMISH) AND SƏLILWƏTƏ† (TSLEIL-WAUTUTH) TERRITORIES / VANCOUVER – First Nations leaders and provincial officials from across B.C. are coming together for the eighth B.C. Cabinet and First Nations Leaders’ Gathering, working together to recognize, respect and advance government-to-government relationships.

Premier David Eby, together with Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Robert Phillips, Regional Chief Terry Teegee and Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, opened the two-day event Nov. 2, 2023. They committed to work together to build on the strong foundations of a government-to-government relationship and to advance meaningful reconciliation in the province, to uphold self-determination and create opportunity for everyone in B.C.

One of the largest meetings of First Nations and provincial leaders in the country, the gathering enables First Nations leaders and provincial government officials to discuss important community issues through one-on-one meetings. Leaders may also participate in plenary and discussion sessions on topics such as, implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, new decision-making models, implementing a distinctions-based approach, and addressing anti-Indigenous racism.

More than 1,000 people are registered to attend, a record number, representing 193 First Nations and organizations, with more than 900 one-on-one meetings scheduled.

The gathering is co-hosted and organized by the provincial government and the First Nations Leadership Council, which is comprised of the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

Quotes:

Premier David Eby –

“We know that working in consultation and co-operation with First Nations is the best way to move forward and tackle the challenges we face. By bringing people together, we are advancing respectful relationships that recognize rights, deepen partnerships and help us take action on climate change, housing, health care and building a strong economy. Together, we will build a stronger, more inclusive and equitable B.C., one that will create a brighter future for everyone.”

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations –

"With each year that passes, and as the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act takes effect, we are witnessing a gradual transformation in British Columbia's governance. The monumental task of shifting attitudes, perceptions and power dynamics has proven to be a significant challenge. The gathering provides First Nations and B.C.'s leadership the opportunity to recommit to the recognition of First Nations' rights, reconciliation and the importance of collaboration in decision-making processes. In this journey, we are confronted with significant challenges that require addressing longstanding issues of land rights, resource extraction and economic development. It is essential to find pathways that strike a balance between competing interests while prioritizing First Nations' self-determination and environmental stewardship."

Robert Phillips, political executive, First Nations Summit –

"First Nations Leaders' Gathering provides an important opportunity for dialogue about our shared work to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (the Declaration Act) and to transform colonial institutions, processes and systems to advance reconciliation, decolonize the Crown-First Nation relationship, and stand up First Nations' inherent, constitutional and human rights. The Declaration Act is still in its infancy. It needs our collective resolve to ensure it has meaning and a legacy, and that it facilitates a complete reset of how the provincial Crown relates with First Nations in B.C. We must continue to work in partnership to vigorously defend the Declaration Act and the promise and potential it holds for reconciliation. If done right, the legacy will be reconciliation, modernized co-existence, enhanced environmental stewardship and prosperity for future generations."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Union of BC Indian Chiefs –

"Coming out of the record-setting and horrendous wildfire season, this critical gathering is set against the backdrop of the climate crisis. Now, more than ever, we must work together to uphold First Nations' jurisdiction over our land, water and air, and work toward redress as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We must continue to uphold our critical commitment to work together on implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and focus on the important work of alignment of laws, which will necessitate moving from political platitudes into spaces of discomfort and beyond. I am extremely hopeful that working together, we can achieve these seismic changes."

Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and Minister Responsible for the Declaration Act Secretariat –

"As we approach the fourth anniversary of the Declaration Act, we are working with Indigenous Peoples across the province to deliver tangible changes on the ground, in ways that reflect the unique priorities of each community. By listening, learning and collaborating over the next two days, we will continue to transform our relationships moving from one-off, short-term transactions to long-term partnerships based on recognition and respect."

Learn More:

To learn about the First Nations Leaders' Gathering, visit: <https://www.fnlg.gov.bc.ca>

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, visit: <https://declaration.gov.bc.ca>

BC Assembly of First Nations: [https:// www.bcafn.ca/](https://www.bcafn.ca/)

First Nations Summit: <https://fns.bc.ca>

Union of BC Indian Chiefs: <https://www.ubcic.bc.ca>

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