

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

September 13, 2024

On 17th Anniversary of UN Declaration, FNLC Calls for Ongoing Implementation of Groundbreaking Legislation

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) Today, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) marks the 17th anniversary of the adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration), a pivotal moment in the global recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights, with significant current threats in the provincial context.

The FNLC is extremely concerned that B.C. Conservative Leader John Rustad has stated his intent to repeal the UN Declaration if elected in the upcoming provincial election. In January 2024 he stated, "We must ... repeal the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which was established for conditions in other countries — not Canada."¹ Presumably Mr. Rustad is aware that the Province does not have jurisdiction to repeal the UN Declaration, but only the provincial *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act).

"Repealing legislation designed to support the implementation of an international human rights instrument, as suggested by Mr. Rustad, sets an extremely dangerous precedent" stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee, B.C. Assembly of First Nations. "The UN Declaration sets out minimum standards for Indigenous peoples' survival, dignity, and well-being. To suggest that Indigenous peoples in Canada are not worthy of such basic standards is an affront to not only Indigenous rights but human rights writ large."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated "Recently, the Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association (PHARA) launched litigation attacking the constitutionality of the Declaration Act. This self-serving act by a small group of individuals who prioritize their private docks over the protection and realization of the basic human rights of First Nations threatens to jeopardize the small but important advancements we've made together. We know that PHARA's views are not reflective of the majority of British Columbians. We must show the world that we are so much more than the most regressive among us, and that we unequivocally value human rights over individual excess."

"As we celebrate this anniversary, it is important to reflect on the progress made while recognizing the work that still lies ahead," concluded Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive. "Given the ongoing and intersecting, multi-generational impacts of colonialism, we are grateful to have the UN Declaration and the related provincial and federal legislation



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¹ <https://ckpghtoday.ca/2024/02/01/bc-conservative-leader-calls-on-government-to-repeal-undrip/>.

as incredibly important tools to advance reconciliation work. We call upon all Canadians, governments, organizations, and individuals to loudly renew their commitment to reconciliation and the full implementation of Indigenous rights. This is not the time to consider rolling back our rights in any way.”

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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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