



Pacific Institute
for Climate Solutions



NEWS RELEASE

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Relationship Protocol advances First Nations climate solutions

The [First Nations Leadership Council](#) (FNLC) and the [Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions](#) (PICS) have entered into a Relationship Protocol to strengthen First Nations climate leadership, advance climate priorities, and generate meaningful benefits for First Nations in British Columbia.

The [Relationship Protocol between First Nations Leadership Council and the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions](#) establishes a collaborative, constructive, and voluntary working relationship between the FNLC and PICS, a collaborative research institute that is hosted at the University of Victoria. It is designed to uphold First Nations title, rights, and treaty rights while advancing climate action across British Columbia.

Through this protocol, FNLC and PICS will support the implementation of the [BC First Nations Climate Strategy](#) and Action Plan and the [Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC](#). These frameworks present a strong vision for First Nations-led climate action and emergency management, supporting current and future generations in achieving self-determination to care for the Earth and ensure health and stability in the face of the ongoing human-made climate crisis.

To support the protocol's implementation, PICS will invest in capacity building, research, and educational opportunities that foster collaboration between universities, First Nations organizations, and Nation partners. These efforts will complement the FNLC's ongoing implementation work.

The protocol will be in effect for four years. It was signed by the FNLC, PICS, and UVic on Jan. 21, 2025, during the BC Cabinet and First Nations Leaders' Gathering. The artwork for the Protocol was designed by Gitxsan artist, author, and knowledge keeper Hetxw'ms Gyetxw.

The protocol aligns with the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) and supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically #10 (Reduced Inequalities), #13 (Climate Action), and #16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Learn more about the [SDGs at UVic](#).

"This Relationship Protocol represents a critical step in building true partnerships that uphold First Nation rights while addressing climate change—the most pressing existential issue facing humanity. As land and ocean peoples with a profound connection to Mother Earth, First Nations in BC have long been on the frontlines of this crisis. Our traditional and modern knowledge systems enable us

to adapt, thrive, and contribute to climate action in our Nations. By collaborating with PICS, we are strengthening First Nation-led research and initiatives that will benefit many generations to come.”

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations

“We have to elevate our thinking. We are well on our way to a climate crisis. Each and every year is regarded as the hottest only to be eclipsed the next year. We have to think beyond what the needs are for this coming year, we are responsible for the well-being of our families and grandchildren. I am excited for the opportunity to partner with PICS to ensure First Nations knowledge and innovation can be spotlighted in research. We have an emotional relationship to our lands and waters, it will trigger great discussions.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Union of BC Indian Chiefs

“Collaborative relationships such as those generated under this protocol are essential to addressing climate change. The climate crisis poses a direct threat to our way of life. It has the potential to kill our languages, our traditional food sources, and our customs and traditions. How will BC First Nations survive if they are forced to evacuate their communities due to impacts of the climate emergency such as rising sea levels, wildfires, flooding and loss of economic opportunities due to damage to our natural resources and ecosystems. We must collectively work together to identify and implement innovative solutions to mitigate, and hopefully reverse, the dire climate path we are currently on. If we don’t take collective action on the climate crisis now, we will be failing our future generations.”

Hugh Braker, Political Executive, First Nations Summit

“First Nations have deep wisdom, rich lived experience, and a long history of environmental stewardship and climate action. PICS is honoured to support First Nations climate leadership and contribute to respectful, reciprocal, and relationship-based collaborations that weaves First Nations’ and Westerns knowledges to implement climate solutions. The Relationship Protocol creates a meaningful foundation for academic and community partnerships that benefit First Nations and their lands and waters.”

Ian Mauro, Executive Director, Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions

“This Relationship Protocol sets a new standard for how research relationships can and should be structured by, with, and for First Nations organizations and communities. It will help inspire a new generation of climate researchers to work in deep partnership with First Nations to collaboratively increase capacity, knowledge, and applied climate solutions that benefit communities. The Protocol demonstrates how universities can give back to the First Nations on whose unceded territories our institutions stand.”

Qwul'sih'yah'maht, Robina Thomas, Vice-President Indigenous, University of Victoria

About the First Nations Leadership Council:

We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

- 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 British Columbia Indian Chiefs](#) (UBCIC).
- The FNLC is a collaborative political working partnership among the three organizations, with the aim of advancing the interests of Nations in British Columbia.
- The mandate and work of the FNLC is collectively directed by Nations' governments through resolutions of the three political organizations.

About the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS):

The Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) catalyzes and mobilizes research, partnerships, and knowledge that generate climate action. PICS is hosted and led by the University of Victoria (UVic) in collaboration with Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Northern British Columbia.

A [backgrounder](#) is also available.

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A media kit containing photos [is available on Dropbox](#).

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About the University of Victoria

The University of Victoria is a leading research-intensive institution, offering transformative, hands-on learning opportunities to more than 22,000 students on the beautiful coast of British Columbia. As a hub of groundbreaking research, UVic faculty, staff and students are making a significant impact on issues addressing challenges that matter to people, places and the planet. UVic consistently publishes a higher proportion of research based on international collaborations than any other university in North America. Our commitment to advancing climate action, addressing social determinants of health, and supporting Indigenous reconciliation and revitalization is making a difference—from scientific and business breakthroughs to cultural and creative achievements. Find out more at uvic.ca. [Territory acknowledgement](#)

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