



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

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BCAFN Encourages BC Government to Heed Throne Speech's Continued Commitment Towards Reconciliation

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – Feb. 12, 2020) – Yesterday the BC Government issued its speech from the Throne which comes on the heels of ongoing and escalating protests on First Nations lands throughout Canada. These highly charged confrontations are testing commitments to reconciliation and the future implementation of Bill 41: *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. As we expect, the pathway to reconciliation is not smooth and easy but will involve many ups, downs and hardships, and will be advanced over many years as we work to unravel over 150 years of colonial law and practice. The commitment made on both sides must be strong and resolute and must stay on course as we progress to live and work together peacefully in a just and equal society.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated, “The government must continue to show how we can implement the *UN Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples*. These rights come from our ancestors before the Settlers arrived on our territories. These rights include our own laws that exist beside those of the common law in Canada. We are entering into a transition in governance and law. We must make the change to create the certainty we need for our investments our languages, housing, infrastructure and human capital.”

He added, “Canadians need to understand that First Nations are not against development. It must be noted that all good projects have made the investments in securing the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations. We are witnessing a growing situation of conflict in northern B.C. where the Crown (federal and provincial) has been dragging its feet for over 20 years. TransCanada and the Crown has known for years that the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs did not support the project - we lack a broad strategy on significant land use planning for major projects. We have solutions that are not being considered.”

BC Government has recommitted to reconciliation with BC First Nations and will continue to advance Indigenous rights as human rights through the implementation of Bill 41. This work has begun through the Action Plan in collaboration with the First Nations Leadership Council. Funding for Indigenous housing projects, Indigenous languages and mental health, which was initiated last year, will continue.

The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) calls on all levels of government, industry and civil society to never give up on reconciliation between First Nations peoples and Canadians. Since time immemorial First Nations have governed their lands and resources through their own laws and customs and this stewardship and jurisdiction will not change.

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