



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

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BCAFN Welcomes B.C. Government's 2022-23 Budget and Commitments for Reconciliation

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC) – The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) welcomes the British Columbia government's budget for the upcoming fiscal year which has committed resources toward economic rebuilding and recovery and reconciliation.

"We require significant investments to support Indigenous governing nations as they recover from harms caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, wildfires and flooding. Critical infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged and they must be built back, and built back better, as we anticipate escalating impacts from future climate change events," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. The Regional Chief continues, "The financial and political commitments made in this new budget are a good beginning, but more investments will be required to accomplish the many important goals and major decisions First Nations have kept on hold for too long because of a lack of resources and support."

Major commitments in the 2022-2023 budget impacting First Nations include:

- \$44 million to create a new Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship, and support government's goals of stimulating economic activity, environmental sustainability and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. This ministry will have a leadership role working with Indigenous governments and organizations to develop a new vision and new policies for land, water and resource management to bring government's natural resource policy framework in line with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.
- \$12 million over three years to create a new Declaration Act Secretariat that will guide and assist government to meet its obligation to ensure legislation is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and is developed in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples.
- Increased access to justice for Indigenous people through a virtual Indigenous Justice Centre.
- Expanding the Indigenous Forest Bioeconomy Program to include a new Accelerator Program, which will help Indigenous partners commercialize and scale up innovative forest-based products.
- Funding for Indigenous-led emergency management priorities in First Nations communities.
- Connecting First Nations communities to high-speed internet.

Decades of discriminatory and colonial influenced policies and programs have left First Nations communities in B.C. with non-existent, inadequate and/or weakened

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infrastructure and services. First Nations must be an integral part of all government planning and investment for economic rebuilding and recovery. It is time for all the partners to be at the table to realize the vision of a strong and resilient future.

The BCAFN looks forward to working with the BC government to advance further changes to laws and policies that will build the government-to-government relationships as per First Nations inherent rights and treaty rights, and as required under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2019).

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