



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

March 22, 2022

On World Water Day, BCAFN Calls for Water Sustainability Act Alignment with UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC) – World Water Day, held every March 22nd since 1993, celebrates freshwater and raises awareness of the 2 billion people worldwide living without safe drinking water. This figure includes thousands of Indigenous peoples across Canada who are continually denied access to clean drinking water in our own territories. World Water Day 2022 is focused on groundwater, a hidden resource with visible impacts everywhere.

“On this World Water Day, we honour and celebrate our waters today and every day. Unfortunately, this past year has affirmed that the global climate emergency imminently threatens our watersheds and, therefore, our communities,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “We must work together to protect our waters now more than ever.”

First Nations in British Columbia have endured unprecedented climate emergencies, and the provincial government’s failure to regulate groundwater has put our communities at further risk. While groundwater licensing was recently enacted through the *Water Sustainability Act*, BC continues to fail to achieve Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in this regulatory process.

The BCAFN implores the Province to fully implement the *Water Sustainability Act* and all water regulatory frameworks in alignment with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, implementation must include collaborative governance structures that place First Nations rights to water and jurisdictional authority at the core of all decision-making.

“Our environment's natural ability to cope with flooding, fires, and other extreme weather events has been compromised. This impacts water cycles and threatens our most vital resource,” Teegee continued. “First Nations must be supported in our efforts to monitor and protect our watersheds with long-term funding through a dedicated Watershed Security Fund. Water is more than one day of celebration each year. Water is our lifeblood; water is life.”

In honour of World Water Day 2022, the BCAFN hosted a [water ceremony](#) on the unceded x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) territories at Garry Point Park on March 18th. The BCAFN extends gratitude to those who attended: AFN National Chief RoseAnne Archibald, Chief Wayne Sparrow, Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Elder Minnie Kenoras, Chief Harvey McLeod, Erik Blaney, First Nations' Emergency Services Society, and JoAnn Buffalo.

#honouringourancestors



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