

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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Canada's United Nations Declaration Act's National Action Plan: A First Step on a Long Road to bring Canada into Alignment with UNDRIP

(xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) recognizes that this week's tabling of Canada's National Action Plan (NAP) to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration), as mandated by the *United Nations Declaration Act* (UNDA) is an important first step; however, it is critical that the release be followed by concrete steps to effect systemic change, an adequate investment in building First Nations' capacity, appropriate redress measures to address the wrongs of the past, and the appropriate mechanisms to fully recognize Indigenous peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent and self-determination.

The UN Declaration is the most comprehensive articulation of the human rights of the world's Indigenous peoples. The implementation of the UN Declaration in its entirety is critical if we are to jointly address the ongoing social inequity and marginalization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. To meet the standards of the UN Declaration, the NAP and the Canadian government must be committed to deep systemic change, including the explicit recognition of Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, self-government and free, prior and informed consent over all matters which impact their rights.

"To achieve the goals of the NAP, the FNLC is calling on the government of Canada to provide critical capacity funding to all First Nations so that they can be actively engaged in the implementation and ongoing review of the NAP to ensure its alignment with the interests, goals and rights of Indigenous peoples", said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "The FNLC remains concerned with what has been a severe underfunding of First Nations' governments to be engaged in the process to date. If the funding issue is not addressed, it will severely hamper the potential outcomes and legitimacy of the UNDA NAP."

"The FNLC reiterates that this work must be carried out according to a distinctions-based approach", stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the UBCIC. "Particularly in BC, First Nations are the only distinct group of peoples with inherent and constitutionally protected title and territorial-based rights. Any UNDA NAP implementation work or further discussions with Métis organizations in BC must not seek to develop the false notion that Métis organizations have any rights to lands and resources in BC."

"The NAP is a promising first step, but without these additional measures, there is no feasible way to co-develop or action any of the priorities and principles contained within the NAP, or for the Government of Canada to claim that its processes pertaining to the development of its national action plan are aligned with the UN Declaration", said Regional Chief Terry Teegee of the BC Assembly of First Nations.



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