
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
BC Assembly of First Nations
First Nations Summit
Union of BC Indian Chiefs

B.C. government, First Nations will share gaming revenue, co-develop legislation to implement UN declaration

COAST SALISH TERRITORIES/VANCOUVER – B.C. First Nations will share in provincial gaming revenue to support self-government, strong, healthy communities, and services that make life better for families. This funding will be a central piece of Budget 2019 to support reconciliation.

The BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs, working together as the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), and the Province announced they are co-developing new legislation for introduction in 2019 to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN declaration) in B.C.

"Undoubtedly this is a momentous occasion for all First Nations in the Province of B.C.," said Grand Chief Joe Hall, First Nations lead negotiator and past chair of the BC First Nations Gaming Commission. "We have worked at this for many, many years and now we have finally arrived at an agreement that will see much-needed revenue from gaming shared with all the First Nations communities of B.C. The countless stories that we heard about how the revenue will make a significant difference in our communities was both heart-warming and inspirational. Our negotiating team is so pleased that this government has by demonstration addressed and resolved this specific long-standing unfairness. It bodes well for the reconciliation efforts in this province."

"UN declaration legislation and gaming revenue sharing are important steps forward to advance true and lasting reconciliation, and create certainty and opportunity for First Nations and the province as a whole," said Premier Horgan. "Sharing gaming revenues will mean First Nations have the ability to invest in the services and infrastructure healthy communities need – child care, supports for new mothers, housing, road upgrades and economic development to create a better future for everyone in B.C."

The joint announcement was made by the provincial government and First Nations Leadership Council at the annual B.C. Cabinet-First Nations Leaders' Gathering in Vancouver, where more than 650 meetings between First Nations leaders, cabinet ministers and deputy ministers will be held over the next two days.

"This is a historic and progressive action by the provincial government to address the ongoing issues regarding jurisdiction and gaming revenue sharing," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee of the BC Assembly of First Nations. "We see this as a positive first step and look forward to this new fiscal arrangement. We will see a growth in the number and quality of community

projects, including business ventures that will consequently contribute to increased economic prosperity for all British Columbians.”

The FNLC and provincial government have been working together to develop a set of concrete actions to advance reconciliation together, with new legislation and gaming revenue sharing as top priorities. The First Nations Gaming Commission has been in negotiations with the Province over the past year on a model to implement gaming revenue sharing. For decades, First Nations leaders have advocated for a share of gaming revenue.

“We are pleased the Government of B.C. has committed to the implementation of the UN declaration and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, but now we need to put these commitments into concrete actions,” said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. “After many years and attempts to create a mutual agenda and roadmap for an improved relationship, and moving substantially forward on reconciliation, B.C. First Nations and the government have finally landed on a renewed vision and plan for reconciling Aboriginal title and rights, with asserted Crown title and jurisdiction.” She continued, “The Commitment Document sets out a progressive shared vision and plan with the Province. It recognizes our inherent rights of self-determination and jurisdiction, as well as our rights related to our lands, resources and territories. This new path and our collective work must be based on a new set of principles and values rather than the old colonial standard of denial.”

“We are committing to work together with First Nations throughout B.C. in ways we never have before, to take bold steps that truly support self-government and self-determination,” said Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. “For the first time, the B.C. government will be sharing gaming revenues with First Nations, for the benefit of every nation across this province.”

The Province’s commitment to gaming revenue sharing starts with \$2 million in immediate support to establish a B.C. First Nations gaming distribution limited partnership, which will manage the new revenue.

“Today’s historic announcement marks a significant achievement in the Government of B.C.’s journey to reconcile its colonial history with the unextinguished Title and Rights of Indigenous peoples,” stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “First Nations in B.C. continue to experience the ongoing impacts of colonization, including a lack of recognition for our rights and disproportionately poor living conditions. We are hopeful that the joint work we commit to with the Province will improve the lives of our people and for all British Columbians. Jointly-developed, recognition- and rights-based legislative, policy and operational changes are needed to get out of this colonial hangover. B.C.’s commitment to developing a legislative framework for the full implementation of the standards and principles of the UN declaration, and its commitment to share gaming revenue, is a significant step towards the realization of Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and the revitalization of Indigenous governments and a nation-to-nation relationship. We cannot reiterate enough, the UN declaration must be the framework for reconciliation in B.C.”

“This is an enormous step forward on the path to reconciliation and truly recognizing the right to self-determination for First Nations,” said Carole James, Minister of Finance. “First Nations know better than anyone what their communities need to thrive. When First Nations can focus on their priorities, it creates new opportunities for communities to flourish both today and for

the generations to come.”

Quick Facts:

- All First Nations will be eligible for a portion of the new gaming revenue fund. A new limited partnership, comprised of a First Nations-appointed board of directors, will oversee the distribution of the funds.
- First Nations will determine the best use for the new funding from a share of annual provincial gaming revenues. Funding will focus on priorities in the following framework: health and wellness; infrastructure, safety, transportation and housing; economic and business development; education, language, culture and training; community development and environmental protection; and capacity building, fiscal management and governance. Within that framework, First Nations governments will determine their own priorities for these funds.
- Gaming revenue sharing will be provided in addition to existing revenue sharing. Currently, economic benefits agreements between the Province and First Nations are primarily resource based and provide approximately \$125 million annually to First Nations whose land and rights are affected.
- The B.C. Cabinet and First Nations Leaders' Gathering is being held at the Vancouver Convention Centre Nov. 29-30, 2018. It is organized in partnership between the First Nations Leadership Council and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. The annual gathering offers opportunities for First Nations leaders to meet one-to-one with B.C. cabinet ministers as well as participate in plenary and breakout sessions on issues of importance to their communities.

Learn More:

Shared vision, guiding principles, goals and objectives: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BC_FNLC_Vision.pdf

Concrete actions: transforming laws, policies, processes and structures: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BC_FNLC_Actions.pdf

British Columbia – First Nations Proposed Commitment Document 2015: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Commitment_Document.pdf

BC Assembly of First Nations: <https://www.afn.ca/>

First Nations Summit: <http://fns.bc.ca/>

Union of BC Indian Chiefs: <https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/>

Factsheet: provincial government actions, investments to support reconciliation: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/18576>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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B.C., First Nations Leadership Council agree to joint concrete actions for reconciliation

New legislation and a share of provincial gaming revenues for First Nations top the list of priorities recently agreed to between the provincial government and First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) under a set of concrete actions that form a joint work plan to implement the 2015 Commitment Document. The joint work, guided by a shared vision, will strengthen government-to-government relationships with First Nations as the Province continues its work to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN declaration) and Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action.

The joint concrete actions include:

- Developing legislation by fall 2019, similar to the federal private member's Bill C-262, to establish the UN declaration as the framework for reconciliation in British Columbia.
- Developing new fiscal models of sharing provincial revenues to support First Nations self-government, including a new model to share gaming revenue by 2019.
- Establishing an independent Indigenous commission within three years that supports First Nations, upon request, with self-government, including boundary resolutions, developing constitutions, making laws and policies, and land-use planning, as identified in the 2015 Commitment Document.
- Reforming legislation and policies through a joint review table to reduce barriers to reconciliation, with a plan for changes in child welfare, environmental assessment and forestry within a year as identified in the 2015 Commitment Document.
- Developing a multi-year strategy to promote education, both within the school system and more broadly, to British Columbians on the history and contributions of First Nations within a year.
- Designing principles for new, innovative and creative models for negotiation and dispute resolution between the provincial government and First Nations within a year.

The 2015 Commitment Document set an agenda for achieving an effective Crown-First Nations relationship in B.C., and working collaboratively to improve social and economic outcomes for First Nations communities. It is seen as a key tool for advancing Aboriginal title and rights, and as a means for First Nations to work toward establishing their own jurisdictions, governance, laws and responsibilities. The vision and concrete actions documents help to mobilize this agenda by outlining a clear approach and a shared work plan for achieving meaningful progress.

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