



## BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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**BCAFN SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY**  
**March 4 & 5, 2026**  
**In person & online via Zoom**

**Resolution 02/2026**

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR FIRST NATIONS-LED GLACIERS, SNOWPACK, AND WATER SECURITY INITIATIVE**

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**MOVED BY: CHIEF FRANCIS LACEESE, TL'ESQOX**

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**SECONDED BY: CHIEF DONALD SAM, ?AKISQNUK FIRST NATION**

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**DECISION: CARRIED**

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### WHEREAS:

- A. First Nations in British Columbia (B.C.) are on the frontlines of the climate emergency, facing increasing drought, flooding, wildfire, ecosystem disruption, and water insecurity, all of which threaten inherent Title and Rights, cultural continuity, food systems, and responsibilities to future generations;
- B. glaciers are disappearing rapidly due to climate change. The United Nations declared 2025 the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation (IYGP), and established 2025-2034 as the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Science as a global effort to enhance research and drive urgent action to protect Earth's frozen areas for billions of people, including Indigenous peoples, who rely on them for survival;
- C. B.C. is home to approximately 18,100 glaciers, which are significantly impacted by climate change, decreased snowpack, and rising temperatures leading to altered streamflow timing, declining water quality and availability, increased water temperatures, and heightened geohazard risks;
- D. seasonal snowpack and glacier-fed systems are critical freshwater sources for many First Nations communities and ecosystems, yet there is currently no consolidated, publicly accessible provincial

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analysis that identifies the First Nations that rely on glaciers and snowpack for drinking water, food sovereignty and cultural identity;

- E. research, monitoring systems, and data collection on glacier and snowpack retreat in B.C., especially concerning small glaciers and localized areas, show significant gaps. Furthermore, current initiatives often fail to meaningfully engage First Nations, exacerbating existing challenges in stewarding and managing water sources while adapting to potential long-term water scarcity scenarios;
- F. the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration), which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the Province of B.C., passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:

Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision making institutions.

Article 19: States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

Article 25: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

Article 26(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired;

(2): Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired;

(3): States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 39: Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration;

- G. glaciers and headwaters hold spiritual, cultural and ecological significance for First Nations in B.C., forming part of living systems governed under First Nations laws, knowledge systems and stewardship responsibilities;
- H. there is an urgent need for a First Nations-led, rights-based approach to glacier and snowpack-related water security that centers Title and Rights holders in governance, data sovereignty, stewardship planning, and long-term resilience strategies; and

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- I. BCAFN Resolution 05/2021 mandates the Regional Chief to support community-led climate leadership, and BCAFN Resolution 06/2022 endorses the First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan. The Strategy's pathway Land and Water Protection, Theme 3.2 aims to ensure respect and recognition of First Nations water governance and authority to steward and manage water sources and protect natural water ecosystems.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly declare their support for the United Nations Decade of Action for Cryospheric Science (2025-2034) and call on the Federal and Provincial Governments to increase global efforts in alignment with the United Nations by strengthening international cooperation and allocating financial resources to expand and support First Nations-led research initiatives annually, monitoring systems and mitigation actions focused on glaciers and snowpack loss and the resulting impacts on long-term water availability, biodiversity, food security, First Nations culture and spirituality and the rights and responsibilities of First Nations in BC;
2. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly mandate BCAFN to work with interested First Nations in British Columbia and domestic and/or international like-minded organizations to explore, develop, and advance a First Nations-led Glaciers, Snowpack, and Water Security Initiative aimed to:
  - Enhance or develop First Nations stewardship frameworks for glaciers and freshwater, including data collection, monitoring systems, and policy reform to ensure resilience against the short and long-term impacts from glaciers, ice and snowpack loss; and
  - Strengthen collaboration between First Nations and Indigenous peoples worldwide affected by glacier retreat to share knowledge, data, and best practices, while advocating for meaningful global efforts to combat climate change; and
3. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Federal and Provincial Government, universities, and non-governmental organizations to meaningfully engage First Nations to uphold rights, knowledge and governance systems when doing cryospheric-related research and/or policy development and establish partnerships with rights-holders when conducting projects in their unceded territories.

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