BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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Prince George, BC V2K 5S3
Website: www.bcafn.ca

BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
October 14, 15 & 16, 2026
In person & online via Zoom

Resolution 27/2026

SUBJECT:	**URGENT ACTION ON NICOLA WATERSHED WATER SCARCITY, SALMON PROTECTION, AND JOINT DECISION-MAKING**
MOVED BY:	**PROXY VICE CHIEF MIKE SMITHERS, COLDWATER INDIAN BAND**
SECONDED BY:	**CHIEF DAN MANUEL, UPPER NICOLA BAND**
DECISION:	**CARRIED**

WHEREAS:

A. First Nations in B.C. continue to exercise and uphold their inherent and constitutionally protected title, rights, laws, responsibilities, and jurisdiction in relation to their lands, waters, territories, and resources for present and future generations;

B. the Nicola Watershed Governance Partnership (NWGP), a government-to-government partnership between the Nicola Five Chiefs - representing Upper Nicola Band, Lower Nicola Indian Band, Coldwater Indian Band, Nooaitch Indian Band and Shackan Indian Band- and the Province of B.C., established the nk'eʔxép Management Committee as a functioning, shared water-scarcity decision-making process to monitor conditions, recommend locally based water-scarcity levels, incorporate local and cultural indicators, coordinate responses, and communicate with water users; this process currently operates within the Province's water-scarcity decision-making for the Nicola Watershed and is being pilot that may inform broader application across B.C.;

C. on July 27, 2026, the Nicola Five Chiefs identified a water security crisis in the Nicola Watershed, grounded their response in Nłeʔkepmxc and Syilx laws, teachings and responsibilities to future

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generations, and identified low flows, drying creeks, historically low lake levels, limited storage, high temperatures, declining water quality, wildfire risk, and serious threats to fish and fish habitat, including spawning Chinook, Coho, and kokanee;

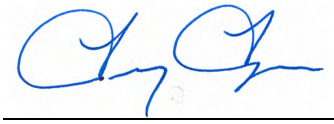
D. on July 27, 2026, the Nicola Five Chiefs also wrote to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), to raise concerns regarding DFO participation in the Nicola water-scarcity response and requesting regular federal fisheries participation, a current written assessment of fisheries risks associated with low flows and high water temperatures, confirmation of emergency monitoring and fish-protection options, and a clear federal escalation pathway, highlighting gaps in federal fisheries governance and information-response at a time of significant risk to salmon and fish habitat;

E. 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 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 29(1):** Indigenous Peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for Indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.
> **Article 32(2):** States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources;

F. water users, including agricultural users, have cooperated with the joint Nicola water-scarcity response, demonstrating that the crisis is not simply a matter of compliance or overuse. The Nicola Five Chiefs have warned that conditions exceed what the existing framework and ordinary response tools can address: conservation, irrigation scheduling, regulatory curtailment, and Temporary Protection Orders may reduce demand and protect remaining flows, but they cannot address the underlying water shortage, inadequate storage, and broader watershed and climate conditions driving the crisis; and

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G. the Nicola Five Chiefs have called on the governments of B.C. and Canada; the BCAFN, UBCIC, and First Nations Summit working together as the First Nations Leadership Council; First Nations emergency-management partners and other relevant agencies to provide urgent partnership, funding, and support for long-term water security, including water storage, watershed restoration, fish and salmon habitat protection, water-quality monitoring, groundwater recharge, agricultural water resilience, wildfire protection, community resilience, and climate adaptation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

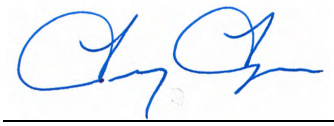
1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly fully support the Nicola Five Chiefs' call for urgent emergency-level provincial and federal support in response to the Nicola Watershed water security crisis, and recognize that water security must include the protection of fish and aquatic ecosystems, Indigenous food and cultural values, groundwater, agricultural resilience, wildfire preparedness, community safety, and drinking water;

2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly urge the Province of B.C. to continue to support, resource, and uphold the existing and functioning Nicola Five Chiefs- Nicola Watershed Governance Partnership (NWGP)-nk'eʔxép Management Committee water-scarcity decision-making process, including its role as a pilot that may inform water-scarcity decision-making in other watersheds, and to work with the Nicola Five Chiefs to establish a clear escalation pathway when a water-scarcity crisis exceeds the capacity of the existing framework and ordinary water-management tools to address the underlying causes and requires Ministerial, emergency, funding, regulatory or cross-government action;

3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly urge the government of Canada, through Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), to establish regular and accountable participation in the Nicola Five Chiefs and NWGP water-scarcity response, provide timely written assessments of fisheries risks, confirm available emergency monitoring, fish-passage, protection, salvage and conservation measures and associated federal resources, and establish a clear escalation and decision pathway for urgent situations threatening salmon and fish habitat;

4. The BCAFN Chief-in-Assembly urge the governments of B.C. and Canada to work immediately on a government-to-government basis with the Nicola Five Chiefs through the NWGP to identify, fund and implement coordinated short- and long-term measures that address the underlying causes and structural vulnerabilities driving the Nicola water-security crisis, including emergency fish and habitat protection, water-storage and flow-support solutions, watershed restoration, water-quality and groundwater monitoring, agricultural water resilience, wildfire resilience and climate adaptation, rather than relying primarily on conservation and curtailment measures that cannot create additional water supply; and

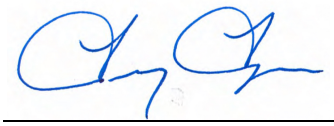
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5. The BCAFN Chief-in-Assembly directs BCAFN to work with the Nicola Five and other like-minded First Nations organizations to advocate for immediate provincial and federal funding and action to address the Nicola Watershed crisis, support the existing Nicola Five Chiefs-NWGP water-scarcity governance process, establish effective escalation pathways when local frameworks are exceeded, and advance First Nations-led, watershed-specific decision-making that recognizes Indigenous laws, knowledge, local monitoring and First Nations decision-making institutions.

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