BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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

Resolution 35/2026

SUBJECT:	**SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH ON FIRST NATIONS-LED CONSERVATION ECONOMIES**
MOVED BY:	**CHIEF PAM JACK, PENELAKUT TRIBE**
SECONDED BY:	**CHIEF EDDY JULES, SKEETCHESN**
DECISION:	**CARRIED**

WHEREAS:

A. Conservation economies are an economic model in which income, employment, and community well-being are generated through activities that protect, restore, and sustainably steward ecosystems, rather than through extractive resource development, an approach that First Nations have practiced in their territories since long before it was given this name;

B. First Nations are already successfully stewarding some of Canada's most ecologically important and carbon-rich territories by pursuing conservation economy projects, including ecosystem protection, restoration, and stewardship, which are widely recognized as nature-based climate solutions, supporting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions and bringing biodiversity benefits alongside economic returns;

C. the benefits generated by First Nations-led conservation economy projects in British Columbia (B.C.) are not well documented, accessible, rights-based resources to help First Nations design and make the case for these projects are limited, and the current policy and funding landscape also does not adequately support their implementation and scaling;

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D. 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 government of B.C., passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:

> **Article 3:** Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development;
> **Article 21**: **(1)** Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security. **(2)** States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities;
> **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: (1)** Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources. **(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. **(3)** States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact;

E. The provincial and federal governments are fast-tracking major projects in the name of economic development whilst downplaying the environmental impacts of these projects as well as their infringement on First Nations' inherent, constitutionally protected and Treaty and Aboriginal rights, title, and jurisdiction;

F. conservation economies projects championed by First Nations including Indigenous Guardians programs, Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), ecotourism, habitat and watershed restoration, and carbon markets, demonstrate that there is a way to generate income and employment while protecting the ecosystems that sustain us;

G. there is a need for a First Nations-led, rights-based approach to conservation economy research and the development of resources and tools that centres Title and Rights holders in the governance, stewardship, planning, and long-term resilience of their territories;

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H. by BCAFN Resolution 04/2019, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly declared a climate emergency and supported the development of the B.C. First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan, which calls for support and recognition of First Nations-led sustainable and low-carbon economic development initiatives;

I. by BCAFN Resolution 05/2021, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the Regional Chief and BCAFN to support First Nations in their leadership role to advance and benefit from the growth of a new, clean and just economy;

J. BCAFN's existing work through the Building Climate Resilience from Indigenous Perspectives Project (2024-2028) and the First Nations Carbon Toolkit (2023) advances Indigenous-led approaches to nature-based climate solutions and provides a foundation for further research into conservation economies; and

K. by BCAFN Resolution 05/2025, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly endorsed the B.C. First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda, which supports First Nations-led conservation economies and stewardship (Theme 6, Recommendation 6.4) and calls for appropriate funding to be provided to First Nations governments to design, plan, and implement nature-based climate solutions.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. that the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the Regional Chief to call on the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada to:
    a. ensure that decisions on all projects of national interest account for the full environmental, social, cultural, and economic costs and benefits of proposed development, including the value of the lands, waters, and ecosystems affected;
    b. ensure that all projects of national interest uphold First Nations' right to free, prior and informed consent and their inherent and constitutionally protected rights, title, and jurisdiction; and
    c. recognize First Nations-led conservation economy initiatives as major projects eligible for the same priority designation, streamlined approvals, and financing supports currently directed toward industrial and extractive development;

2. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the BCAFN to undertake exploratory research and engagement on conservation economies to better understand and support conservation economy models among First Nations in B.C., and report back to First Nations Chiefs and leadership; and

3. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the BCAFN to seek funding for research and engagement that would examine how First Nations-led conservation economy models in B.C. can advance

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nature-based climate solutions, reduce or avoid GHG emissions, support biodiversity, strengthen community well-being, and to identify policy funding barriers and opportunities.

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