

# **Joint Call: BC must recommit to meaningful implementation of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.**

***Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights exist independent of provincial legislation. To avoid costly legal battles, BC has the obligation to ensure that the Province's laws, practices, and policies are aligned with these rights through frameworks, processes, and negotiation tables co-developed with Indigenous peoples.***

As the world bears witness to political instability, increasingly severe climate impacts, and growing economic insecurity, we, the undersigned, call upon Premier David Eby and his BC NDP Government to fulfill their obligations and commitments to recognizing and implementing the human rights of Indigenous peoples, as required by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) and BC's own *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act)* and *Interpretation Act*. Amending the *Declaration Act* or the *Interpretation Act* in an effort to limit their effect would set back our collective reconciliation efforts by decades.

Five years ago, the BC government, under the leadership of Premier John Horgan, championed co-development of the *Declaration Act* alongside Indigenous peoples. BC was the first jurisdiction in Canada to take the necessary step of passing legislation directing the government to implement the UN Declaration and ensure that all provincial laws, policies, and practices are consistent with the inherent rights, standards, and principles of the UN Declaration. This was a significant accomplishment to which many of us stood beside the BC government and celebrated its leadership.

These efforts advanced Canada's international standing and set an example for regional and national governments on how a government can move forward in partnership with Indigenous peoples to address the ongoing legacies of colonialism and ensure a prosperous future for all. The *Declaration Act* was passed unanimously by all Parties in the BC Legislature and was applauded by a wide array of civil society organizations, industry leaders, faith-based organizations, environmental groups, municipalities, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. Today, we are concerned that, despite significant

resources and effort being committed to the implementation of the *Declaration Act*, political will appears to be faltering.

Meaningful implementation of the UN Declaration and *Declaration Act* present significant opportunities to address many of the longstanding challenges our province faces, including addressing the social and economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples, promoting healthier, sustainable, and vibrant communities, increasing local decision-making, accountability, and transparency, tackling climate change and supporting climate resilience, promoting economic growth through certainty and predictable processes, recognizing the historical and contemporary contributions and cultures of Indigenous peoples in this province, and ensuring that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike hold the same opportunity to participate, lead, and benefit in the future prosperity of this province.

We are deeply troubled by the recent rise in anti-Indigenous rhetoric and fearmongering in this province that has framed the realization of the fundamental human rights of Indigenous peoples as detrimental to economic growth, security, and the interests of others. We stand united in opposition to these divisive narratives. We believe that our futures are intertwined and our collective prosperity is inextricably linked. Questions still remain on what implementation of the UN Declaration and *Declaration Act* will look like, but now is not the time to cede ground to those who cynically spread fear and doubt about that vital work. At this time, rather than taking a step back, we look to Premier Eby and his government to lead and remain steadfast in upholding its obligations, commitments, values, and principles, and to take the necessary steps forward in full partnership with Indigenous peoples.

We, the undersigned, stand with Indigenous peoples in BC and call on Premier Eby and his government to recommit to meaningful implementation of the UN Declaration and the *Declaration Act*, and to not amend the *Declaration Act* or the *Interpretation Act*.

## **Endorsed by:**

Barb Nederpel, President, Hospital Employees' Union

Karen Ranalletta, President, CUPE BC

Stephen von Sychowski, President, Vancouver & District Labour Council

Patrick Johnson, President, UFCW 1518

Brenda Chu, Acting President, MoveUP

Amanda Burrows, Executive Director, First United

Monica McKinlay, Lead Pastor, Grandview Church

Jessica Clogg, Executive Director & Senior Counsel, West Coast Environmental Law

Mark Gifford, Real Estate Foundation of BC

Dr. Sara Ghebremusse, Assistant Professor, Peter A. Allard School of Law and Academic Director, UBC Future Minerals Initiative

Liza Hughes, Executive Director, BC Civil Liberties Association

Ketty Nivyabandi, Amnesty International Canada Section, English Speaking

Randall Cohn, Executive Director, Pivot Legal Society

Angela Marie MacDougall, BWSS Battered Women's Support Services

Jacqui Mendes, Executive Director, Community Legal Assistance Society

Alice Kendall, Executive Director, Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

Sacia Burton & Chantelle Spicer, Co-Provincial Directors, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition

David Suzuki, Grandfather

John Vaillant, Journalist and Author

Robert Bateman, Artist

Birgit Bateman

Stepan Wood, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Law, Society & Sustainability, Peter A. Allard School of Law, UBC

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Sarah Hunt, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair, University of Victoria

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Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie, Member (N. America), UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission (SEITC)

Kate Lawes, Parents4climate

Elza Kephart, Organizer, RBC Off Screen

Gina Morris, Spokesperson, Kamloops Moms for Clean Air

Will Patric, Executive Director, Rivers Without Borders

Annabel Webb, President/Co-founder, Justice for Girls

Nicole Kief, Executive Director, Prisoners' Legal Services

Chad Hughes, Executive Director, Elk River Alliance

Pierre Iachetti, Executive Director, David Suzuki Foundation

Shelley Luce, Campaigns Director, Sierra Club BC

Robyn Duncan, Executive Director, Wildsight

Tim Burkhart, Director of Landscape Protection, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

Torrance Coste, Associate Director, Wilderness Committee

Sarah McNeil, Executive Director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - British Columbia

Nikki Skuce, Director, Northern Confluence Initiative

Kate McMahon, Team Lead, For Our Kids Burnaby

Kat Hartwig, Executive Director, Living Lakes Canada

Tim Morris, Project Director, BC Water Legacy – MakeWay Charitable Society

Jamie Kneen, MiningWatch Canada

Douglas Gook, Director, FORPA Forest Protection Allies

Eve Saint, Co-founder/Lead Coordinator, 8th Fire Rising  
Bulkley Valley Stewardship Coalition  
Kai Nagata, Energy Campaigner, Dogwood  
Elizabeth May, MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands/Green Party of Canada Leader  
Emily Lowan, Leader of the BC Greens  
Vicky Law, Executive Director, Rise Women's Legal Centre  
Ben Simoni, Youth Climate Corps BC  
Julia Hill Sorochan, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust  
Gabrielle Legault, Assistant Professor, Indigenous Studies, UBC Okanagan  
Kendra Strauss, Director, The Labour Studies Program, Simon Fraser University  
Kimberly Shearon, Executive Director, Ecojustice  
Beatrice Frank, Georgia Strait Alliance  
Shawn Wilson, Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies, UBC Okanagan  
Amanda Adams and Iglika Ivanova, Co-Executive Directors, BC Policy Solutions  
Les Kojima, President, National Association of Japanese Canadians  
Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff, District of Saanich  
Jessica Asch & Tara Williamson, Co-Research Directors, Indigenous Law Research Unit  
Mary-Woo Sims, LLD Former BC Chief Human Rights Commissioner  
Susan Kim, Councillor, City of Victoria  
Sarah Otto, Professor, UBC  
Cora Beitel, RM, Strathcona Midwifery  
Decolonial Solidarity Network  
Andrew Dumbrille, Co-Director, Equal Routes  
Jeremy Vander Hoek, Indigenous Rights Program Coordinator, Canadian Friends Service Committee  
Sue Cairns, Councillor, City of Kimberley  
Bruce Murdoch, Board Member East Kootenay Climate Hub  
Liz McDowell, Senior Campaigns Director, Stand.earth