



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

April 18, 2024

BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee Advocates for Stronger Measures in Canada's *UN Declaration Act* Action Plan

Lenape (Lenapehoking) Traditional Territory/New York City, NY, USA – BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee addressed the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and urgently called upon Canada to develop a comprehensive, whole-of-government framework to guide the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration Act* (UNDA) and its Action Plan. In addition, he called for immediate investment in First Nations' technical and governance capacity to ensure First Nations' fulsome participation in the implementation of their rights, as required by Canada's international Indigenous rights obligations.

Regional Chief Teegee addressed the disproportion impacts of the climate crisis on Indigenous peoples, stating that success in addressing climate change and promoting climate resiliency lies in the recognition of Indigenous peoples' human rights, a necessary first step in this direction in its recognition and implementation of the human rights standards and principles within the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Based on lessons learned from Canada's positive, though flawed, first steps towards the implementation of the *UN Declaration*, Regional Chief Teegee shared with the forum a number of lessons learned and recommendations for Canada and other States to follow in the ongoing implementation of the UN Declaration:

1. THAT, consistent with their international human rights obligations and in recognition of Indigenous Peoples' vulnerability to climate change and Indigenous Peoples' leadership in developing climate solutions, States must develop, in cooperation and consultation with Indigenous Peoples, comprehensive and holistic National Action Plans to fully implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Such Plans must set out concrete steps to advance implementation with appropriate timelines.
2. THAT, in conjunction with these Action Plans, specific measures must also be put in place to ensure transparency and accountability regarding what implementation steps will be taken and how they will be taken in cooperation and consultation with Indigenous Peoples.
3. THAT, in order to fully implement the principles and standards of the *UN Declaration* and its 46 articles, particularly Articles 3, 4, 5, 18, 19, 27, and 32, any attempt by States to implement the *UN Declaration* must necessarily be supported by appropriate financial commitments to ensure Indigenous Peoples have the technical and governance capacity and the revitalization of our Indigenous legal systems to ensure full participation in alignment with the standard of free, prior and informed consent. This funding must reflect the principles of equal and direct access, where adequate, ongoing, and predictable funding is made directly available to Indigenous peoples; and,

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4. THAT, states, consistent with their international human rights obligations, in their implementation of the *UN Declaration*, must develop a whole-of-government framework for implementation, one which is supported by an independent Declaration secretariate to ensure that implementation efforts are being uniformly implemented and removed from political fluctuations.

“Indigenous Peoples, including the 204 First Nations in BC, are at the forefront of dealing with the impacts of climate change, and adequate financing is essential to support First Nations realization of their right to self-determination and self-government, which in turn will ensure adaptation measures such as infrastructure upgrades, environment and biodiversity protections, community resilience projects and sustainable land management practices are attainable and effective to the particular needs of each Nation,” states Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

Effective preparations and management require adequate funding to address community vulnerabilities, mitigation strategies, and recovery efforts. By aligning funding mechanisms with the principles of free, prior, and informed consent, Canada can empower Indigenous Peoples to participate fully in decision-making processes and positively affect the resilience and well-being of communities in Canada and worldwide.

The UNPFII is a high-level advisory body to the Economic and Social Council with the mandate to deal with Indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. The UNPFII forum is the world’s largest gathering of Indigenous Peoples and is taking place this week at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA.

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