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Treaty Commission celebrates provincial Indigenous rights legislation aligning BC laws with international standards

VANCOUVER – Today history was made when Bill 41, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act), received Royal Assent in the BC Legislature. This historic law makes BC the first province or territory in Canada to enact legislation that implements the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (UN Declaration).

The Declaration Act was developed with the First Nations Leadership Council, as directed by Indigenous leaders in BC. It sets out a process to ensure provincial laws are consistent with the rights defined in the UN Declaration, an action plan to achieve the objectives, and annual reporting on progress. The Declaration Act also includes a provision for the provincial government to enter into agreements with Indigenous governments for joint decision-making and consent.

“Joint decision-making is an essential element of treaties. Negotiations for treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements are an opportunity to fulfill this legal obligation in the Declaration Act,” emphasizes Chief Commissioner Celeste Haldane.

Treaties operationalize many of the provisions in both the UN Declaration and the Declaration Act, and treaty tables are already integrating the UN Declaration into negotiations. Since October 2018, seven tables have advanced to Stage 5 treaty negotiations through innovative agreements that support the implementation of the UN Declaration.

In September Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Summit signed a new policy that aligns treaty negotiations with the UN Declaration. This policy encourages flexible, innovative, and collaborative approaches to the negotiation of treaties, agreements, and other constructive agreements, committing to the recognition of Indigenous title and rights, and unequivocally rejecting the notion of extinguishment.

“British Columbia is leading the way in Indigenous rights recognition in Canada and this is a result of the perseverance of Indigenous leaders in this province,” says Chief Commissioner Haldane. “Modern treaties implement the international standards for Indigenous rights enshrined in the UN Declaration. Negotiations, when conducted in the spirit of collaboration and partnership, are the best path to reconciliation.”

“The Treaty Commission looks forward to supporting the implementation of the Declaration Act.”

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Quick Facts

- Read more about how treaties are evolving through policy changes in BCTC’s 2019 annual report at www.bctreaty.ca/annual-reports
- Since January 2018, the Treaty Commission’s mandate has been expanded to include supporting the implementation of the UN Declaration, the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action, and the recognition of First Nations right and title.
- [Recognition and Reconciliation of Rights Policy for Treaty Negotiations in British Columbia](#) (September 2019) endorsed by the Principals of the BC treaty negotiations process: Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Summit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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About the BC Treaty Commission

The Treaty Commission is the independent body responsible for overseeing treaty negotiations among the governments of Canada, BC and First Nations in BC. It has three roles: facilitation, funding, and public information and education.