

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY



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A person is shown from the side, playing a large drum. The drum has a circular head with intricate carvings. The person is wearing a white shirt and a dark hat. The background is a warm, orange-toned image of a person's face, possibly the same person, looking down. The overall mood is traditional and cultural.

Territorial Acknowledgement

With respect and gratitude, the Province acknowledges that the Declaration Act Annual Report Summary was prepared on the territories of the ɫəkwəŋən People, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, whose deep connections with this land continue to this day.

The work profiled in this report took place in the territories of First Nations throughout B.C. The Government of British Columbia respectfully acknowledges these First Nations with gratitude for the many partnerships that enable this important work.



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Premier and Minister's Message



The 2025–26 Declaration Act Annual Report shows the collective efforts of people working together can turn commitments into actions. We thank Indigenous leaders, partners and communities for their guidance, collaboration and expertise.



Together with all British Columbians, we are building a stronger B.C. through partnerships and agreements that support healthy communities, create economic opportunities, improve services that make life easier and advance sustainable stewardship of the land, water and resources.

The path of partnership laid out in the Declaration Act Action Plan – working together with all British Columbians, local and federal governments, organizations and businesses – is the route to a better future.

The 2025–26 Declaration Act Annual Report shows the collective efforts of people working together can turn commitments into actions. We thank Indigenous leaders, partners and communities for their guidance, collaboration and expertise in the development of the report.

Together, we are taking thoughtful action on reconciliation by:

- ➔ Building unique partnerships to encourage investment and improve the services and infrastructure we all rely on
- ➔ Delivering more affordable housing on and off reserve
- ➔ Supporting Indigenous-led health facilities
- ➔ Addressing Indigenous-specific racism and encouraging cultural well-being
- ➔ Improving public and post-secondary education systems

As we acknowledge the work done together over the past year, we also recognize that much work remains. By continuing to work shoulder to shoulder, we will build a more equitable, prosperous and sustainable future for all.

Honourable David Eby
Premier of British Columbia

Honourable Spencer Chandra Herbert
*Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
and the Declaration Act Secretariat*



Introduction

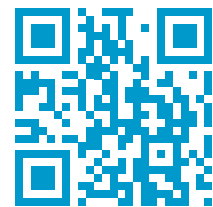
In British Columbia, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act)* provides a framework for advancing reconciliation in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. Passed unanimously by the B.C. Legislative Assembly in 2019, the Declaration Act establishes a path forward that respects the human rights of Indigenous Peoples while introducing greater transparency and predictability in how this work is carried out.

The Province reports annually on collaborative work with Indigenous Peoples to implement key sections of the Declaration Act and advance reconciliation. The 2025–26 Declaration Act Annual Report details progress made between April 1, 2025, and March 31, 2026, on 84 of 89 actions under the Declaration Act Action Plan. The seventh annual report also provides updates on work with Modern Treaty Nations, as well as efforts to align provincial laws with the UN Declaration.

This summary provides an overview of progress along with a selection of stories about what this looks like on the ground, with the full report available online.

The Province thanks First Nations, Modern Treaty Nations and Métis partners for their guidance and meaningful contributions to the 2025–26 Annual Report.

To read the full annual report and explore stories that capture the work underway to implement the Declaration Act, visit: declaration.gov.bc.ca



QR CODE:
declaration.gov.bc.ca

Released in March 2022, the Declaration Act Action Plan sets out a five-year, cross-government approach to implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia. It was developed through two years of intensive engagement with Indigenous Peoples to help ensure it reflects their priorities.



Story: Connecting communities

In rural and remote First Nations communities throughout B.C., improved high-speed internet is changing everyday life.

People can text, email and video call friends, family and neighbours, while also accessing virtual health care, online education and remote work opportunities.

This expanded connectivity is part of the Province's ongoing work, in partnership with First Nations, to ensure that every rural and remote community in B.C. has access to reliable high-speed internet services. One community that was recently connected is Chawathil First Nation, located near Hope.

"I think that for the reserve to be connected to the outside world has been really beneficial for our Elders as well as our mothers as well as our youth – for everyone in general," says Jeanie Kay, a member of Chawathil First Nation and executive assistant to the chief and council. "The high-speed internet is definitely something that is a win-win for community and a win-win for communication everywhere."

Chawathil is one of many communities seeing these changes. In 2017, 66% of households on First Nation reserves had access to high-speed internet services.



Chawathil First Nation is located just west of Hope, B.C., nestled in the beautiful Fraser Valley.

As of January 2026, approximately 88% of homes on First Nations reserves and Treaty Lands had access to high-speed internet, with coverage expected to exceed 96% once all approved projects are completed in 2029.

"The more connected we are, the healthier we are."


For leadership in Chawathil, that connectivity is also changing how the First Nation governs and engages with its members.

"We're able to have faster voting, connect our members better, be more transparent with them and make sure that we're acting in their best interest," says Chief Aaron Pete, Chawathil First Nation.

"I'm so proud that Chawathil has access to this resource and that we're

able to start to show who we are as members of the Stó:lō territory and start to become leaders in certain areas, start to utilize tools that we didn't have access to before. I think it's going to make members proud to be Chawathil," Pete says.

Yale First Nation, not far from Chawathil, is another community that has recently been connected. Member Katherine Giroux, housing director for the First Nation, says one of the first questions she gets from prospective residents is, "Is there Wi-Fi here?" Now that they have it, she says, it's helping bring more people back home, particularly young people.

"Family ties are strong with our people," Giroux says. "The more connected we are, the healthier we are." 

ACTION 4.36:

Ensure every First Nations community in B.C. has high-speed internet services.





Action updates

The Province, in collaboration with Indigenous partners, made steady progress to implement the Declaration Act Action Plan during this reporting period, with many actions moving from planning into implementation.

The action plan includes foundational commitments to support long-term changes in systems, behaviours and understandings. These systemic shifts require sustained, collaborative efforts with Indigenous Peoples and cannot be achieved within a five-year period. As a result, many actions will continue beyond 2027.

To date, 12 actions are complete, 62 are on track, eight are delayed, three are discontinued and five will begin reporting next year.

PROGRESS IN ACTION

The **Éyameth' Health Centre** opened, providing culturally safe health services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the North Fraser region.

ACTION 4.10:

Prioritize the implementation of Primary Care Networks, the First Nations-led Primary Health Care Initiative, and other primary-care priorities, embedding Indigenous perspectives and priorities into models of care to increase Indigenous Peoples' access to primary care and other health services, and to improve cultural safety and quality of care.

ACTIONS PROGRESS





Trends and patterns

Clear trends and patterns show what helps or slows progress on actions.



Progress is strongest when there is ongoing engagement with Indigenous Peoples and when structures such as tripartite tables, bilateral agreements and shared decision-making processes support collaboration.



Strong relationships, clear leadership and well-co-ordinated teams also help work move forward.



Practical supports – including adequate staff, funding and planning – make a big difference, especially for longer-term or more complicated actions.

At the same time, progress on some actions was slowed this year due to fiscal pressures faced by B.C., similar to other jurisdictions across Canada and the world. The time required to advance necessary policy also slowed progress in some areas. These factors affected the ability to expand or sustain some initiatives.

Indigenous partners also identified a need for public education to combat misinformation, raise awareness about Indigenous rights and increase understanding of the Declaration Act.

The Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan, released in June 2026, includes Indigenous-specific actions developed through consultation and co-operation with Indigenous partners. These actions are intended to address Indigenous-specific racism in government programs and services, and to support government's reconciliation commitments.

Ministries and Indigenous partners are finding practical and creative approaches to address challenges, including the use of pilot projects and existing tables and processes.

Actions that are more complex – because they involve system-wide changes or co-ordination across multiple partners – take longer to implement. All actions that were delayed this year were among the most complex.

Overall, these patterns show that progress depends on effective co-ordination, strong partnerships and adequate resources. When these are in place, even complex actions can move forward.

PROGRESS IN ACTION

In January 2026, Tahltan Central Government and the Province reached a historic milestone by approving the reopening of the Eskay Creek gold-silver mine. This was enabled through a consent-based Section 7 agreement under the Declaration Act and will bring economic benefits to communities in the northwest.

ACTION 1.03:

Utilize sections 6 and 7 of the Declaration Act to complete and implement government-to-government agreements that recognize Indigenous self-government and self-determination.



Partnerships

Implementation of the Declaration Act Action Plan is grounded in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples. Over time, the number and diversity of partners involved in this work has grown, reflecting ongoing efforts to build and strengthen relationships.

Partners include population-specific organizations, individual First Nations, leadership organizations, advisory councils and sector-specific organizations.

Every year, the number of Indigenous partners working with the Province to implement the Declaration Act Action Plan continues to grow – from 95 in 2022–23 to 175 in 2025–26.

Work is increasingly carried out through government-to-government processes and jointly led tables, which support continuity, shared understanding and co-ordinated decision-making.

Some partnerships also required additional time and dialogue this year as Declaration Act policy discussions continued to evolve.

In addition to its work with Indigenous partners, the Province is also engaging municipalities, regional governments and a wide range of stakeholders to support collective efforts in advancing reconciliation. These partners play an important role in implementing actions on the ground and in fostering respectful relationships within communities.

Efforts include creating opportunities for collaboration and engagement. In doing so, the Province is working to support shared understanding, provide greater clarity and encourage co-ordinated approaches to reconciliation.

Overall, work with Indigenous partners is becoming more consistent, sustained and better co-ordinated across government, supporting stronger, partnership-based approaches to implementing the action plan.

PROGRESS IN ACTION

The Watershed Security Fund supported a second intake of 28 community-driven projects, enabling local stewardship priorities to move forward. Projects advance watershed resiliency while supporting biodiversity, fish habitat and clean water. For example, Lake Babine Nation is assessing restoration sites for sockeye-bearing streams.

ACTION 2.07:

Collaborate with First Nations to develop and implement strategies, plans and initiatives for sustainable water management, and to identify policy or legislative reforms supporting Indigenous water stewardship, including shared decision-making. Co-develop the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations and initiate implementation of the strategy at a local watershed scale.



Story: Bringing balance through fire

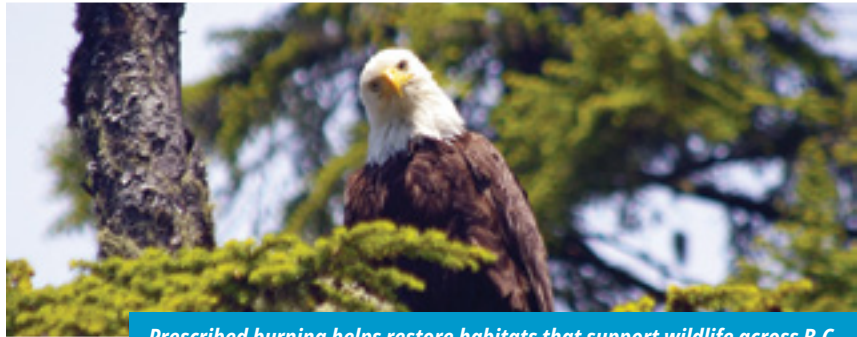
On a September day in 2025, about 30 people gather to light a controlled fire in a forest

outside Cranbrook to reduce the risk of wildfire. It may sound counterintuitive, but it's part of a longstanding Indigenous practice.

"My experience with fire started at a young age," says Chris Joseph, forestry lead at the ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation, who is participating in the burn. "We didn't have a lawnmower, so we used fire to cut the grass around the house. It's part of the culture."

The burn is part of a two-week prescribed fire training exchange (TRES) that brings together fire, forestry and land management professionals to learn and share. The training is co-hosted by the BC Wildfire Service and Ktunaxa First Nations with support from the First Nations' Emergency Services Society. Indigenous uses of fire are rooted in millennia of traditional knowledge and stewardship. This history continues to inform the use of fire in resource management today.

By carefully applying controlled fire to high-risk areas, teams can reduce built-up forest fuels, such as overgrowth and underbrush, helping prevent more severe wildfires and supporting healthier ecosystems.



Prescribed burning helps restore habitats that support wildlife across B.C.

"I'd rather be proactive than reactive," says Chris Johnson from Yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓i 'it Fire, who participated in B.C.'s first TRES in 2024. "Reactive, you're out there fighting a fire. Being proactive is what we're doing here today."

As wildfires in British Columbia become increasingly common and destructive, the Province and First Nations are expanding prescribed or traditional burning and creating new ways to share knowledge and training, including TRES.


"I'd rather be proactive than reactive."

Last year, more than 80 prescribed burns took place in B.C., about a third of them through partnerships with First Nations. Additionally, through the BC FireSmart Committee, the Province and First Nations are supporting prescribedfire.ca,

a resource that shares First Nations perspectives on fire stewardship.

"I think that learning and sharing lived experiences related to prescribed burning is really important for those that are involved in fighting fires or planning and managing how fires are dealt with when they do happen," says Nasuʔkin Cheryl Casimer from the community of ʔaʔq̓am.

Reducing wildfire risk also supports local economies, particularly during the summer wildfire season. Industries such as tourism, timber harvesting, tree planting and agriculture all benefit from stronger wildfire prevention efforts.

Back in the forest outside Cranbrook, the fire moves slowly through the underbrush, guided by generations of knowledge that continue to protect communities and renew the land. 

Action 2.11: Integrate traditional practices and cultural uses of fire into wildfire prevention and land management practices, and support the reintroduction of strategized burning.





Advancing modern treaties

Through the Shared Priorities Framework, the Alliance of BC Modern Treaty Nations and the Province are working together to implement modern treaties through a co-ordinated, whole-of-government approach.

Over the past year, this work has included improving how the Province engages with Modern Treaty Nations (MTNs). Together, the Province and MTNs developed new guidance for provincial staff to support more consistent and informed engagement. As a result, MTNs have reported increased opportunities to participate earlier in policy and legislative development. While progress is being made, further work is needed to ensure this approach is applied consistently across government.

This focus on strengthening engagement also extended to advancing work on fiscal arrangements. At the fifth annual Premier's Forum, held on Nisga'a Nation territory in June 2025, the Premier, Cabinet and leaders of MTNs discussed shared priorities, including fiscal arrangements that better reflect their jurisdiction and autonomy. Building on these discussions, the Province is advancing work on a policy to guide the collaborative development of fiscal arrangements with MTNs.

The Shared Priorities Framework is a 2022 agreement between the Province and Modern Treaty Nations to support timely, effective and well-resourced treaty implementation.



Together, the Province and Modern Treaty Nations developed new guidance for provincial staff to support more consistent and informed engagement.



Story: Rising with the tide

Kung K_ayangas Marlene Liddle walks through a forest on Haida Gwaii, her feet sinking softly into the moss. She stops at a towering cedar, looks up, then wraps her arms around the trunk.

“This is for thanking our sister cedar for giving us a piece of her clothing to make our creations out of a piece of hers,” she says, before carefully removing a strip of bark to weave into a hat.

Liddle, stewardship director for the Council of the Haida Nation, says working with the governments of B.C. and Canada through a series of agreements is supporting the Nation in managing their lands from a Haida worldview.

One of those agreements is the historic Gaayhllxid • Gíhlagalgang “Rising Tide” Haida Title Lands Agreement, signed by the Haida Nation and the Province in April 2024. This first-of-its-kind agreement recognizes Haida Aboriginal title across terrestrial Haida Gwaii and sets out a phased approach to align Haida and provincial laws while maintaining stability for residents and communities.

“It’s life changing for us,” Liddle says. “We want to keep our culture alive as much as possible. Rising Tide allows us to do that because we can bring back some of our own Haida laws.

For me as a citizen, the Gaayhllxid • Gíhlagalgang agreement is something I’ve waited for all my life. It gives recognition that we were here prior to any contact and that we are still here.”

The Gaayhllxid • Gíhlagalgang “Rising Tide” agreement was followed by the Chiixuujin / Chaaw Kaawgaa “Big Tide (Low Water)” Haida Title Lands Agreement, signed by the Haida Nation and the federal government in December 2024. Together, these agreements recognize Haida Aboriginal title in both provincial and federal law and set out a shared path for moving forward.

“It’s a big challenge to reconcile with our past, a very difficult past,” says Gaagwiis (Jason Alsop), president of the Council of the Haida Nation.

“Recognizing title, the rights, everything that comes with it allows us to start that healing journey and start that path to reconciling our laws, reconciling our society.”

“It gives recognition that we were here prior to any contact and that we are still here.”

The Haida Nation has always upheld their inherent title to Haida Gwaii, caring for the lands and waters in a reciprocal relationship. Implementation of the Gaayhllxid • Gíhlagalgang “Rising Tide” agreement marks another milestone in the Haida principle of TII yahda • TI yahda (Making it right) and significant revitalization of Haida stewardship and governance on Haida Gwaii, to the benefit of all beings that call the islands home. 



Balance Rock, Haida Gwaii, B.C.

Action 1.02: Shift from short-term transactional arrangements to the co-development of long-term agreements that recognize and support reconciliation, self-determination, decision-making and economic independence.





Aligning laws

Section 3 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act requires the Province to review and align its laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples.

To advance this work, the Province established the Declaration Act Secretariat, which provides co-ordination, guidance and support across government.

In 2022, the secretariat released the Interim Approach to Implement the Requirements of Section 3, which sets out government-wide processes for how ministries work with Indigenous Peoples when developing or updating laws, policies and practices.

Since then, ministries across government have been applying the interim approach in legislative and policy development, with each ministry responsible for implementing Section 3 requirements within its own work. Approaches vary depending on the subject matter, scope and potential impacts of proposed laws, as well as the priorities of Indigenous Peoples.

This work continues to evolve in both the policy and legal contexts. A recent Court of Appeals decision has raised questions about how the Declaration Act should be implemented. Through partnership with Indigenous leaders, processes are underway to develop a durable solution that provides greater clarity and ensures the success of our collective work.

The secretariat continues to support this work by promoting consistent approaches, including through training and capacity building for public servants and helping ministries apply the interim approach and advance specific initiatives.

While no legislation to align laws with the Declaration Act was introduced in 2025–26, alignment efforts continue across government. This long-term work requires sustained consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples and must reflect the needs and priorities of communities throughout British Columbia.

Through partnership with Indigenous leaders, processes are underway to develop a durable solution that provides greater clarity and ensures the success of our collective work.



Story: Powering our future

On the Douglas Channel near Kitimat, cedar-lined shores meet deep coastal waters where the Haisla Nation has lived, travelled and governed for generations.

Today, a floating industrial structure is taking shape along this coast. The Haisla Nation, in partnership with Pembina Pipeline Corporation, is building Cedar LNG, balancing economic development with environmental stewardship.

“Together with our partner Pembina Pipeline, we are setting a new standard for responsible and sustainable energy development that protects the environment and our traditional way of life,” says Crystal Smith, former chief councillor of the Haisla Nation.

Cedar LNG is the first project of its kind in the world: a majority Indigenous-owned liquefied natural gas export facility. It is also one of the largest Indigenous-owned infrastructure projects in the country.


“Our vision for Cedar LNG was always predicated on being able to source the cleanest power option to ensure our project delivers LNG with the lowest possible carbon footprint,” says Chief Councillor Maureen Nyce of the Haisla Nation.

That vision is supported through a \$200-million provincial contribution to help electrify the project and connect it to B.C.’s hydroelectric grid.

“We are grateful to the provincial government for supporting our Nation’s goal of sustainably advancing development in our territory on our own terms and in accordance with our values,” says Nyce. “When Indigenous communities lead projects as owners, as is the case with Cedar LNG, we are able to ensure that these projects are developed in the most environmentally responsible manner, while generating revenues that enable us to protect our way of life and build long-term prosperity.”

Cedar LNG is expected to be operational in 2028 and to export approximately three million tonnes of LNG per year. At peak construction, it will employ up to 500 people, with approximately 100 long-term jobs once operational.

“We are setting a new standard for responsible and sustainable energy development that protects the environment and our traditional way of life.”

As construction continues along the Douglas Channel, Cedar LNG reflects a broader shift in how projects are built in British Columbia: with First Nations leading as owners and decision-makers on their territories. 

The Cedar LNG facility runs on clean, B.C. energy – making it one of the lowest emitting facilities of its kind.



Action 2.12: Collaboratively develop and implement CleanBC and the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy to support resilient communities and clean economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples that benefit our shared climate and advance reconciliation.







Looking forward

Implementing the Declaration Act is long-term, generational work that continues to evolve in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.

Over the next year, the Province will continue advancing actions under the current plan. Work will continue to focus on addressing challenges and improving how actions are resourced, co-ordinated and delivered.

At the same time, the Province is working with Indigenous partners to review and update the action plan. This includes assessing progress, identifying lessons learned and considering opportunities for improvement. Engagement will continue with Indigenous Peoples – as well as local governments, industry and other partners – to inform the next action plan covering 2028 to 2033.

While some actions will be completed by 2027, many will continue beyond the current plan. Advancing reconciliation includes strengthening relationships, decision-making processes and laws, and requires sustained effort over time. The Province remains committed to working in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to continue this important work.



Advancing reconciliation includes strengthening relationships, decision-making processes and laws, and requires sustained effort over time.





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