

Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples

The B.C. government is deeply committed to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia. As employees of the BC Public Service, our important work puts us in a position to positively change the Province of B.C.’s relationship with Indigenous peoples in unique ways. We can accomplish this transformation through many aspects of our work, such as delivery of services, policy and legislation, taxation and investment, and publicly championing a respectful and collaborative relationship with Indigenous peoples.

The [Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#) show us how we will approach this transformation. Like the [Standards of Conduct](#) and the [BC Public Service Values](#), these 10 draft principles are government-focused and represent the starting point in our engagements with Indigenous peoples going forward.

Members of the BC Public Service are already seen as leaders in reconciliation across the country. Our work towards modern treaties and other reconciliation agreements, shared decision-making, resource revenue sharing, First Nations governance in health care, land stewardship, and Indigenous place-naming are just a few examples of existing work within the public service that is already aligned with the principles.

In the sidebar of this page you will find some resources to help you better understand the draft principles and how they relate to foundational reconciliation instruments already adopted by the B.C. government – namely, the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#).

10 Draft Principles – Frequently Asked Questions

Why has the Province of B.C. adopted the Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples?

The B.C. government is deeply committed to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia. Members of the BC Public Service are uniquely positioned to transform the Province of B.C.’s relationships with Indigenous peoples through the important work they do every day. These 10 draft principles are being shared as a resource to help guide all public service employees as we build relationships with Indigenous peoples based on respect and recognition of inherent rights. The draft principles guide our work to implement the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) and recent direction from the courts – part of every ministry’s mandate. The principles are being shared in draft as a starting point for engagement with Indigenous peoples.

Why are the principles being adopted as draft? Will they change?

These principles are considered draft. Future input and guidance from Indigenous peoples may result in the principles evolving and changing over time. That is the nature of enduring relationships between Indigenous peoples and the government focused on reconciliation. The principles are being

communicated across the BC Public Service to guide our relationships now, as a starting point, based on the UN declaration and Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

Why are we introducing the draft principles now?

The B.C. government has committed to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in B.C. by implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. The draft principles will guide the work required by the BC Public Service to fulfill this commitment.

Why did the Province of B.C. adopt the draft principles based on the federal government's approach?

The adoption of draft principles in B.C. parallels action taken by the federal government on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Given many of the same circumstances and shared histories, the government of B.C. has come to a similar place as the federal government with respect to renewing relationships with Indigenous peoples and the need for guidance for the public service. This alignment with the federal government puts both the B.C. government and the federal government on the same path – one that supports Indigenous ways of knowing, and incorporates Indigenous legal and governance approaches into government processes and policies.

How are the draft principles connected to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action?

The draft principles are a tool to guide the BC Public Service in our work to adopt the declaration and the calls to action. The principles reflect the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples described in the declaration, and mirror the actions related to a shift in relationships called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. By using the draft principles in our work, we are using the instruments of the declaration and the calls to action.

What is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

A United Nations General Assembly declaration is a document expressing political commitment on matters of global significance. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an instrument that outlines fundamental human rights of Indigenous peoples. It was adopted by the United Nations in 2007 after almost 25 years of negotiations.

The declaration seeks to ensure that governments and organizations recognize and uphold the collective and individual rights of Indigenous peoples, including their rights to self-determination, to determine their political status and organization, to autonomy and self-government, and to their lands, territories and resources.

The 46 articles within the declaration are broad and "constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world." The articles outline rights such as self-determination and internal governance; preservation of cultural, spiritual and religious traditions; education and communication; lands and resources; social and economic conditions; and, consultation – including free, prior and informed consent.

What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Calls to Action?

Approximately 150,000 Indigenous children were removed and separated from their families and communities to attend residential schools. While most of the 139 Indian Residential Schools in Canada ceased to operate by the mid-1970s, the last federally-run school closed in the late 1990s.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) resulted from the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class action settlement in Canadian history. The TRC's mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools.

The commission engaged and documented the truth of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience. Out of the testimony from thousands of people across Canada, the commission developed recommendations on how to address the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation.

In 2015, the commission released its findings and 94 Calls to Action under two broad areas of "Legacy" and "Reconciliation."

"Legacy" recommendations reflect "what was lost" to generations of families impacted by residential schools, such as language and culture.

"Reconciliation" recommendations reflect the desire to create a better future that acknowledges this shared history and identifies opportunities to improve relationships and outcomes.

How are the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action linked?

The UN declaration is an international human rights instrument endorsed by 148 nations across the world, including Canada.

The calls to action are specific to Canada and are focused on reparations for the historical and ongoing damage caused by the residential school system in Canada.

Both focus on improving the rights and well-being of Indigenous peoples, covering areas such as child welfare, education, language and culture, health, social and economic outcomes and justice.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission embraced the UN declaration as "the framework" to redress the human rights violations that have been inflicted on Indigenous peoples throughout Canada's history.

The 94 calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report include the call for all levels of government to undertake measures to implement the UN declaration.

What is self-determination for Indigenous communities?

Self-determination is the foundational principle of the UN declaration, and appears throughout the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The UN declaration describes self-determination as the right of Indigenous peoples to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Recognizing self-determination transforms how the B.C government works with Indigenous peoples and communities. It means that in order to become truly healthy and prosperous, Indigenous communities need decide how they choose to form and exercise their inherent rights, governance, and economic, social and cultural development. It shifts government from transactional relationships to government-to-government relationships that create shared accountabilities.

What is the honour of the Crown?

Honour of the Crown is a central idea employed by the Supreme Court of Canada in reconciling the interests of Indigenous peoples. It's the standard of conduct that the Crown (government) must demonstrate in all dealings with Indigenous peoples – and it requires agents of the Crown (public service employees) to act with honour and integrity, the overarching value of the BC Public Service.

How do I use the draft principles in my day-to-day work?

Each ministry is developing a plan to determine how to implement the draft principles in their organization's day-to-day work. In fact, there are already many activities underway across the public service that already align with the principles. For example:

- Revitalizing the environmental assessment process.
- Improving B.C.'s approach to child welfare.
- Incorporating traditional Indigenous knowledge into resource management.

Do I need to understand the draft principles if I don't work with Indigenous peoples?

Yes. Reconciliation is a whole-of-government responsibility. While the application of the draft principles will be diverse and vary in complexity depending on your role, the principles direct every public service employee to build their understanding of what it means for Indigenous communities to be self-determining and to support other reconciliation efforts.

There is so much we already do and we can do, as public service employees, to contribute to reconciliation, such as:

- Hiring and retaining Indigenous employees.
- Creating a culturally safe environment for Indigenous people to work.
- Developing competencies and cultural intelligence.

What is meant by a renewed fiscal relationship?

Under the draft principles, a true and effective fiscal relationship with Indigenous communities should be government-to-government rather than government-to-administrator, which supports Indigenous jurisdiction and the development of revenue-generating opportunities. A renewed fiscal relationship will enhance funding and services, reset the accountability relationship and strengthen Indigenous communities' capacity to exercise their right to self-determination.

How many Indigenous peoples live in B.C.?

B.C. has the second largest number of Indigenous people in the country. In B.C. in 2016, 270,585 people identified as Indigenous, which includes First Nations, non-status, Métis and Inuit. That accounts for 5.9

per cent of the total provincial population, up from 4.8 per cent in 2006. Indigenous peoples are distinct from one another linguistically, culturally, politically and in many other ways. More information on the Indigenous population is available from [Statistics Canada](#).

Where do we go if we have questions about the draft principles?

Every ministry is developing plans to incorporate the draft principles into their operations. This complements your ministry's efforts already underway to implement the declaration and the calls to action. If you have questions about the principles, it is best to direct those inquiries to the person in your organization responsible for this work.