

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

NEWS RELEASE
April 9, 2026



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First Nations Leadership Council Opposes B.C. Government's Proposal to Suspend DRIPA

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) – The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) opposes the B.C. Government's proposal to suspend key provisions of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA or "Declaration Act") and the *Interpretation Act*, calling it a unilateral betrayal and an abandonment of the Province's commitment to principled reconciliation, as well as serving to create a climate of uncertainty.

On April 2, 2026, Premier Eby announced that his government will not proceed with amendments to the *Declaration Act* and *Interpretation Act* as it had been considering since January, amendments that have been forcefully rejected by First Nations in B.C.

Suspension, as proposed, will place the most critical sections of the *Declaration Act*, and *Interpretation Act* on hold and without legal effect until May 31, 2029 while this NDP Government seeks to bring its attack on the *Gitxaala* B.C. Court of Appeal (BCCA) decision to the Supreme Court of Canada, applying for leave to appeal a ruling that found the Province failed to consult and accommodate and found BC's tenure approval process unlawful. In its leave application, BC argues that the BCCA was wrong, and that the *Declaration Act* does not give courts a mandate to determine inconsistency between the UN Declaration and provincial laws.

Suspension has been falsely framed by Premier Eby as a compromise and an accommodation after the NDP heard resounding First Nations opposition to amendments; however, the immediate effect of a suspension is the same. The NDP Government proposal will effectively neutralize all positive law obligations for the term of this Government. It kicks implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommended framework for reconciliation, down the path for a new government to address.

The FNLC stands with First Nations who oppose unilateral amendments to or suspension of the *Declaration Act*. First Nations will not agree to any unilateral legislative proposal that puts legally required reconciliation work on hold and undermines our inherent and constitutionally protected title and rights.

Terry Teegee, Regional Chief of the B.C. Assembly of First Nations stated, "Premier Eby has broken the trust that Premier Horgan and First Nations worked hard to build. The *Declaration Act* was co-developed, passed unanimously and celebrated as landmark legal commitments to First Nations and British Columbians. First Nations cannot be expected to take a leap of faith when suspension renders the *Declaration Act* ineffective immediately and paves the ways for its inevitable repeal."

Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit said “Suspension is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. It is presented as a compromise, but it achieves all the same goals of gutting the Declaration Act in the short term, while the NDP pursues an appeal in court to undermine the Declaration Act in the long term. B.C. First Nations know this is a false offer and we cannot accept it.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, stated “The Declaration Act is sacrosanct and I reject this dangerous, unilateral suspension/amendment proposal. Had B.C. truly listened to First Nations as they engaged on the unilaterally developed consultation draft, the Premier would know that First Nations want to continue with full implementation of the Declaration Act in its entirety. We cannot stand with this Government when it destroys the hard work that we have built together. B.C. First Nations will not be played for fools. We call on this government to uphold the BCCA ruling in *Gitxaala* and work in good faith with First Nations on implementation of the Declaration Act.”

FNLC calls for the immediate withdrawal of any proposals to amend or suspend the Declaration Act or the *Interpretation Act*. If the government proceeds with any legislative proposal without the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations, the FNLC and First Nations will be forced to pursue every available avenue, legal, political and through direct action to defend First Nations’ rights. The FNLC calls on every B.C. NDP MLA to exercise their conscience on this confidence vote if, indeed, the Premier insists on unilaterally proceeding with suspension. A vote to suspend the Declaration Act is a vote against the human rights of Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia.

The FNLC will hold a press conference on Friday April 10th at 8:30am at the Coast Coal Harbour, Vancouver and via Zoom, more information to come.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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