



50TH (2026) Elders Gathering CULTURAL HOST WILL BE Lil'wat Nation

EVENT DATES: August 25-26, 2026

(Group Leader Mandatory Check-In
is Monday, Aug. 25)

Location: Vancouver Convention Centre, East Building
(Off the lobby shared with the Pan Pacific Hotel)

Please find forms on www.bcelders.com
and click on Elders Gathering

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**Please remember that our office of 26 years is separate from the Elders Gathering
Your support is much appreciated for the provincial elders office!**

LEVELS OF SUPPORT

\$15,000 - Thunderbird

\$5,000 - Killer Whale

\$1,500 - Eagle

\$1,000 – Salmon

\$750 – Frog

\$500 – Sisiutl

\$250 - Hummingbird

Thunderbird Level - \$15,000

1.

Killer Whale Level - \$5,000

1.

Eagle Level - \$1,500

1.

SALMON LEVEL - \$1,000

1.

FROG LEVEL - \$750

1.

SISIUTL LEVEL - \$500

1. FortisBC
2. BC Association of Community Response Networks

Hummingbird Level—\$250

1. Neskonlith Indian Band
2. Leqamel Nation
3. Whispering Pines/Canton FN

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B.C. First Nation sues to reclaim lands 'alienated' by Indian Agent and family

The novel argument leans on a landmark ruling that awarded the Cowichan Nation Aboriginal title over historic villages in Richmond, B.C.

By Stefan Labbé Jan 29, 2026 For Business In Vancouver

A First Nation on B.C.'s central coast has filed a lawsuit looking to recover lands it claims were "alienated" more than a century ago by an Indian Agent and his extended family.

Filed in a B.C. Supreme Court Jan. 26, the suit from the Dzawada'enuxw First Nation targets about five square kilometres of land at the head of the Kingcome Inlet, as well as an estuary and lower portions of the glacier-fed river valley.

The lands—which lie on the mainland opposite northern Vancouver Island—are currently owned in fee simple by the forestry company Interfor, the Nature Trust of B.C., and the province of British Columbia. The case also names the Government of Canada.

Lawyers for the nation declined to speak on the record, and it's not clear if anyone lives on the lands there.

The office of B.C.'s Attorney General said it was unable to comment because the matter was before the courts.

A spokesperson for Interfor said in an email the company has "longstanding and ongoing discussions" with the Dzawada'enuxw, and that it is not engaged in any active forestry operations on its fee-simple parcels in the valley.

The properties identified in the lawsuit belonging to the Nature Trust of B.C. are held in trust, and under provincial and federal law, the group is "legally required to conserve them in perpetuity," a spokesperson said.

About 484 hectares of the lands held by the Nature Trust are part of a conservation area for migratory birds, five species of Pacific salmon, eulachon, and other wildlife like grizzly bears. They lie about 500 metres away from the nation's Ukwanalís Village.

In an email, the Nature Trust said it will "continue to engage" with the First Nation to find ways to work together and protect the lands in question.

"NTBC supports reconciliation and will respect the decisions of the courts," wrote the group using its acronym.

Lawsuit uses Cowichan decision to advance novel argument

The lawsuit uses a novel argument to challenge ownership over swathes of land surrounding historic Dzawada'enuxw village sites. It builds off a landmark 2025 decision that found the Cowichan Nation had its Richmond, B.C., village sites and fishing rights taken from it under colonial rule.

Celebrated by many, the Cowichan decision set off alarm bells for B.C.'s NDP government and others who said they were worried about the integrity of private property rights.

Premier David Eby was not available for comment but a spokesperson for his office pointed to a recent speech in which Eby described “bright lines” the government would not cross when it comes to negotiations with First Nations.

“For our government, private property is non-negotiable. People's homes and businesses are not bargaining chips. Full stop. We will challenge court decisions and we are challenging a court decision that blurs that line,” he said at an industry event in Prince George earlier this month.

“But we cannot and we will not abandon our work to build lasting partnerships that support good jobs and benefit everyone. It is really the only path forward for this province.”

In court documents, lawyers for the Dzawada’enuxw trace a history going back to 1876, when B.C. was moving to allot reserves across the province.

In 1879, Indian Reserve Commissioner Gilbert Malcolm Sproat was said to have carved out a Dzawada’enuxw reserve that included nearly all of the Kingcome river mouth, including the alienated lands. At the time, the lands were home to Indigenous houses, buildings and other structures. They were also used to cultivate food and as Dzawada’enuxw burial grounds, the suit says.

But when the area was surveyed in the summer of 1887, the reserve handed to the Dzawada’enuxw was much smaller and excluded the claimed alienated lands, the lawsuit alleges.

Indian Agent used position to benefit himself and extended family, claims nation

By the late 1880s, the suit claims Indian Agent R.H. Pidcock had recommended that settlers seek to purchase land in the Kingcome Valley. That included buyer Ernest A. Halliday, whose brother William acted as Indian Agent for the region between 1906 and 1932.

In that role, William Halliday is alleged to have witnessed a series of Land Act declarations—where colonial administrators are said to have taken Dzawada’enuxw’s lands and disposed them to settlers.

In an apparent conflict of interest, both brothers are alleged to have simultaneously benefited from the development of forestry in the Kingcome Valley. The suit claims they also corresponded with the province to advocate for further settlement of the area.

By 1914, the Crown’s failure to protect their lands led to the destruction and desecration of an ancient Dzawada’enuxw burial site, the nation alleges.

For more than a century, the First Nations said it has protested to the Crown over the alienation of its lands—including their access to burial grounds, and lands used for cultivation and to harvest timber.

The lawsuit seeks a declaration that the roughly five square kilometres or lands be deemed “Indian Settlement Lands.” Should the novel argument prove successful, it would not guarantee the Dzawada’enuxw fee-simple title over the land.

It would, however, put them in a better position to later claim it as Aboriginal title land.

None of the claims have been tested in court.

AFN Issues Advisory Warning for First Nations Travelling to the United States



Important Travel Advisory

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) has heard reports that some First Nation citizens have been subjected to increased questioning and detainment by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The AFN strongly condemns these actions and reaffirms First Nations' inherent and Jay Treaty rights to cross-border mobility.

The AFN advises any First Nations members traveling to the U.S. to carry valid identification, including a Status Card or a Canadian passport. Anyone requiring assistance with Status Card applications, renewals, replacements, or urgent processing related to travel may contact Indigenous Services Canada's Secure Certificate of Indian Status (SCIS) Program at 1-800-567-9604 or visit www.canada.ca/indigenous-services-canada.

Please note that federal law enforcement may not be familiar with Tribal IDs. If an ICE agent does not accept your Tribal ID as identification, the Native American Rights Fund recommends that you request to speak to their supervisor.

In emergency cases, Canadian citizens in the U.S. can contact the Canadian Consulate for assistance through 1-613-996-8885.

January 25, 2026

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

(ANNews) – The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) has issued an urgent travel advisory for First Nations citizens planning to cross the Canada–United States border, urging caution and preparedness in light of recent actions by U.S. immigration authorities.

On January 23, 2026, the AFN released a statement expressing concern about reports that some First Nations people have faced increased questioning, detainment, and other confrontations with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) while attempting to enter the United States. The advisory stresses that these incidents have raised alarms about the safety and rights of Indigenous travellers.

National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak confirmed to the Canadian Press that at least one First Nations individual experienced a negative border encounter, prompting the AFN to call on members to exercise extra caution when crossing into the U.S. She emphasized that the incidents reflect not only enforcement overreach but potential violations of inherent Indigenous rights and the historic Jay Treaty, which is recognized by the U.S. as ensuring free passage for Indigenous peoples across the border.

“We call on the U.S. administration to fully uphold First Nations peoples’ right to cross the border without harassment or undue hindrance,” Woodhouse Nepinak told the Canadian Press.

What the Advisory Recommends

The AFN strongly encourages First Nations travellers to be fully prepared with all appropriate identification and documentation before attempting to cross the border. Key documents recommended include:

Indian Status Card

Canadian passport

Long-form birth certificate

Documentation verifying familial lineage where applicable.

The advisory also notes that some forms of Tribal identification may not be recognized by U.S. enforcement officers. In such cases, the AFN suggests travellers politely request to speak with a supervisor if their Tribal ID is not accepted.

Community Warnings and Broader Concerns

Several First Nations across Canada have echoed these concerns, issuing their own local advisories. For example, the Kashechewan First Nation — currently managing an evacuation — directed residents in Niagara Falls, Ont. to remain on the Canadian side of the border due to the current political climate and increased U.S. patrol activity. Likewise, the Mississauga First Nation urged members to ensure their identification is valid and current before travelling.

These developments have reignited discussions about border rights and the application of historic agreements. The Jay Treaty of 1794, while recognized by the United States, is not formally acknowledged by the Canadian government — complicating legal interpretations of Indigenous cross-border mobility rights.

Support and Resources

As part of its advisory, the AFN has provided contact information for travellers in need of assistance, including the Canadian Consulate in the U.S. for emergency support.

Looking Ahead

National Chief Woodhouse Nepinak has indicated plans to meet with counterparts in the National Congress of American Indians this spring to discuss border mobility and protection of Indigenous rights. Advocates hope these conversations will lead to clearer processes for First Nations citizens navigating international travel while safeguarding their rights.

Source: AFN

BC court clears path for First Nation lawsuit against port over 'export monopoly'

A judge dismissed Prince Rupert Port Authority's attempt to strike a lawsuit, something it had argued was a 'collateral attack' on the Crown's approval of a gas export terminal

Stefan Labbé

Feb 3, 2026

From: Business In Vancouver www.biv.com/news

B.C.'s second largest port has failed in its attempt to strike a lawsuit from a First Nation claiming it was misled when it signed a benefits agreement connected to a gas export terminal in Prince Rupert.

The legal action dates back to July 30, 2024, when Metlakatla First Nation sued the Prince Rupert Port Authority (PRPA) over the planned expansion of a bulk commodities terminal on Ridley Island.

In her Jan. 30, 2025, decision, B.C. Supreme Court Justice Edlyn Laurie rejected the port authority's attempts to characterize the suit as only fit for a Federal Court.

Metlakatla, wrote Laurie, "does not seek the reversal of the Crown Approval, rather it seeks compensation for losses."

Metlakatla claims it holds unextinguished Aboriginal rights and title in and around the port. That includes an "inescapable economic component" to its Aboriginal rights, with its title encompassing the right to exclusively occupy and decide what the land is used for, the nation claims.

At first, the First Nation appeared to back the project.

The suit claims the port entered into a development agreement with Vopak Development Canada Inc. in 2015, granting the company exclusive rights within the port to receive, store and load certain products for export, including liquefied petroleum gas.

The Crown approved the project in 2022 and the port authority entered into a lease with Vopak involving more than 272 acres of port land.

A year later, Metlakatla signed a mutual benefits agreement with Vopak.

Port 'unjustly enriched' through alleged lack of disclosure

The relationship between Metlakatla, the port and Vopak has since appeared to have soured.

In its lawsuit, the First Nation claimed the port authority had failed to consult them about an "export monopoly" and failed to take any steps to assess how that monopoly would impact Metlakatla's interests.

Metlakatla holds an ownership interest in Trigon Pacific Terminals Ltd., a bulk commodities operator also on Ridley Island.

"Trigon has a commercial interest in expanding its operations on Ridley Island to receive, handle, store and load liquified petroleum gas and other bulk liquids," wrote the judge summarizing the suit's claims.

“In September 2023, Trigon requested, but PRPA refused, to allow Trigon to receive, handle, store, and load liquefied petroleum gas from its facility on Ridley Island.”

By granting an export monopoly to Vopak, Metlakatla claimed the port “lessened the value” of the nation’s ownership interest in Trigon while limiting its use of its traditional territory by preventing the nation from entering into agreements with other proponents.

Among other things, the suit claims the port failed to adequately consult the nation and breached its fiduciary duty, leading to loss and damages to Metlakatla. It also alleged that the port was “unjustly enriched” by the terms of its commercial agreement with Vopak and breached its Constitutional duty to the nation.

In response, the port authority argued that Metlakatla’s claims represented a “collateral attack” on the Crown’s approval of the project. Only the Federal Court, it claimed, has jurisdiction to grant the relief sought by the First Nation.

Prince Rupert Port Authority sought a court order striking or permanently staying Metlakatla’s claim.

“PRPA argues that at its core, the essence of Metlakatla’s claim is a collateral attack on the Crown Approval with only a thin pretence to a private wrong,” wrote Justice Laurie.

The case against the port comes amid more than \$3 billion in infrastructure investments. That includes \$1.46 billion from an AltaGas and Vopak joint venture to export 55,000 barrels per day of liquified petroleum gas (LPG).

Located on the shortest Pacific shipping route linking East Asia with North America, Prince Rupert is 36 hours closer to Shanghai than Vancouver.

The port authority also claims to be built on the North America's deepest harbour, making approach times two to six hours less than many other major ports in the region.

Last year, the port moved 26.3 million tonnes of cargo worth roughly \$60 billion. That's a 14 per cent increase over 2024.

Metlakatla is not the only First Nation vying for rights and title over the port.

In early 2025, the Gitxaala Nation sued multiple levels of government and the Prince Rupert Port Authority in a lawsuit that sought damages and recognition of land title over the port.

Elected Chief Councillor of Gitxaala Nation Lou Ga Gwelks (Linda Innes) said at the time that the consultation process had been like a “box-ticking exercise” used to “clear the way to development and resource extraction.”

“We have always been here,” the chief councillor told Business in Vancouver. “We’ve had continuous occupation of the land and we’ve been denied that by Canada by their historic racist policies.”

Port mischaracterized, narrowly interpreted Metlakatla’s claims

In coming to her decision, the judge analyzed a number of previous cases, involving everything from Indigenous jurisdiction over taxes to disputes over denied hydro projects and a Yukon government decision to pause oil and gas exploration.

The judge leaned heavily on a 2010 Supreme Court of Canada case involving TeleZone Inc., which had its application for a telecommunications license rejected by Industry Canada.

Instead of seeking to quash the government decision, the company sued the federal government in Ontario Superior Court for \$250 million, alleging breach of contract, negligence and unjust enrichment.

The Supreme Court of Canada ultimately ruled unanimously in favour of TeleZone, finding it did not need to pass through the Federal Court before pursuing a private claim for damages in provincial court.

In a similar way, Laurie found Metlakatla's claim does not seek to "invalidate or avoid the consequences" of the Crown's approval of the project. Instead, the nation "seeks an accounting to determine the extent of its losses."

The judge found the port had mischaracterized or narrowly interpreted the nation's claims around negligent misrepresentation. She said it was "not plain and obvious" that Metlakatla's negligence claim was a collateral attack on the Crown's approval for the project.

Laurie came to similar conclusions around Metlakatla's claims of unjust enrichment, breach of duty to consult, and breach of fiduciary duty.

"The plaintiff has pleaded a reasonable cause of action for damages," she concluded.

The judge struck one part of the lawsuit: the request to force the port to hold new consultations. While the nation can still sue for financial losses, the court ruled it cannot use the case to demand more consultation regarding the project's impact on their rights.

Laurie dismissed the rest of the port authority's application.

Wonderful Mother

God made a wonderful mother,
A mother who never grows old;
He made her smile of the sunshine,
And He molded her heart of pure gold;
In her eyes He placed bright shining stars,
In her cheeks fair roses you see;
God made a wonderful mother,
And He gave that dear mother to me.

~ Pat O'Reilly

Why Car Headlights Changed From A Warm Yellow To A Blinding White

By Talia Roepel Feb. 7, 2026 From www.bgr.com

If you are driving at night and get annoyed at the brightness of oncoming headlights, you are not alone. Complaints about headlights are on the rise, not just from traffic coming toward you in the other lane, but also from cars driving behind you. It is not a matter of getting older or jaded with inconsiderate drivers — headlight beams actually have gotten brighter and whiter as technology evolves and car makers adopt newer technologies.

One reason why headlights appear brighter now is a change to the bulbs used in vehicles. Previously, many cars used halogen bulbs, which usually had that trademark warm yellow color. Now, many automakers use LED bulbs. Most "white" LED lights actually start as a blue LED, which is then filtered through a phosphor layer to convert some of that light into longer wavelengths. This gives the appearance of white light being emitted — but it's typically a cooler, bluer white compared to halogens.

LED headlights are functionally brighter and bluer, which impacts your night vision

One reason people enable the Night Vision feature on their phones is to reduce eye strain from blue-leaning light. That same bluish quality of LED light is a big part of why headlights generally appear brighter nowadays. When driving at night, your eyes use more rod cells than they do in daylight, and rods respond more strongly to bluish light. So the cooler whites of LED headlights can look brighter and harsher than warmer halogens, even when both are putting out a similar amount of light. Even still, there are benefits to using LED lights that have prompted this switch.

Car makers made this switch because LED lights are functionally brighter than their halogen counterparts, so drivers with these lights can see the road ahead of them more easily. Since they're directional light sources, LEDs help concentrate more light on the road ahead, enhancing what is actually important for the driver to see. Of course, the brightness and the directness are contributing factors in other drivers feeling as if they get blinded.

Cars are now taller, too, but brighter headlights might not be such a bad thing

Finally, vehicle height has a lot to do with headlights seeming too bright these days. Trucks and SUVs are very popular, and that popularity is only set to grow, with several new electric SUV models in the pipeline for 2026. The heights of these vehicles, however, put the headlights more in line with the eyes of drivers in smaller cars. So the combined problems of the switch to bluer LED lights, the brighter and more direct beams, and the taller vehicles all make today's headlights seem more blinding and distracting on the road.

These brighter headlights make riding in a robotaxi seem appealing, as there is no human driver to be blinded. However, as annoying as they may seem, headlights are not the cause of a huge amount of vehicle crashes. According to data from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI), about one or two out of every thousand car crashes cited headlight glare as a contributing factor between 2015 and 2023. Across that period, the number of vehicle accidents resulting from poor visibility at night due to lack of good lighting actually decreased. So car makers switching to brighter LED headlights may have actually made driving at night safer, though they still contributed to some accidents.

Indigenous artists selected to adorn Campbell River's new aquatic and wellness centre

Published Friday, February 13, 2026 By Robin Grant For the CR Mirror

Indigenous perspectives, stories and art will be on display throughout Campbell River's REC-REATE Aquatic and Wellness Centre when it opens, creating an inclusive and enriching environment for all visitors.

The Strathcona Regional District (SRD), along with the We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum First Nations, have selected the Indigenous artists for the First Nations art program at the centre, which was announced last summer.

Kwakwaka'wakw artist Jessica Chickite was selected to design a mural for the social heart wall, a prominent feature in the new entrance that spans about 13 metres. The mural will showcase stunning imagery of orcas and dynamic sport silhouettes.

Carver Ernest Puglas, with Hunter Puglas and Fisher Roberts, will create the "Pride of the Liḡ'wíłdaŋ", a wall-mounted carved panel that will connect the social heart to the arenas.

Greg Henderson, alongside Junior Henderson and Jaylen Price, will create "Kwankwanxwalige (Thunderbird) and the Liḡ'wíłdaŋ Sea Worm," a 15-foot totem for the outdoor patio planter.

Finally, Brent Smith will create "Raven, Orca, and Bear," three carved figures, about three to five feet tall, for the outdoor patio garden bed.

Last year, the SRD launched the arts program by seeking Indigenous artwork that represents cultural identity, community narratives, and a profound connection to the region. The artwork will be prominently displayed in the aquatic and wellness centre.

According to the SRD, a key objective was to highlight different Liḡ'wíłdaŋ artists and ensure a fair representation from both nations. The four unique works, which represent eight artists from the two nations, will be featured throughout the new facility and its outdoor areas.

The art project was discussed at the SRD's inaugural First Nations Relations Committee Meeting on Feb. 11.

Director Mark Vonesch called the artwork gorgeous.

"One of the exciting things for me is when we have public spaces that have Indigenous culture represented in such a big way, it supports Indigenous kids to feel like they should be there.

“Yes, this is beautiful for non-Indigenous folks to come and understand, (...) but I really see this as being something where Indigenous kids are welcome, and their culture is represented,” Vonesch added.

Director Julie Colborne said she was excited about the mentorship process involved with the project where younger Indigenous artists are mentored and then Indigenous youth will see the art when they used the facilities and also be inspired.

The REC-REATE project budget committed \$175,000 to support First Nations art in the centre.

The artwork will be incorporated into the facility during the aquatic centre’s second phase of construction. This phase will include building the Social Heart and entrance patio, where the artwork will be featured, and is slated to open in January 2027, according to the SRD.

Meanwhile, phase one of the construction is underway, with the facility set to open in September 2026.

Cowichan Tribes request Province and Richmond landowner communications after Aboriginal title fallout

By Kori Sidaway For www.cheknews.ca February 14, 2026

The fallout from the BC Supreme Court decision to grant Cowichan Tribes Aboriginal title over hundreds of acres of Land in Richmond in August of last year, played out in Victoria Supreme Court Friday.

In August, the court ruled that the Cowichan Tribes have Aboriginal title over the land, that Crown and city titles on it are defective and invalid, and that the granting of private titles by the government unjustifiably infringed on the Cowichan title.

Montrose Properties owns 120 hectares of industrial land in the 300-hectare title area next to the Fraser River that encompasses Canadian Tire and Coca-Cola Canada distribution centres.

In November, Richmond-based company Montrose Properties issued a public notice that it would be asking to re-open the case to defend its interests as a private land owner.

In response, Cowichan Tribes has applied for unredacted access to nearly 10 years of correspondence between the province and landowners, including Montrose Properties, to get a better idea about what was going on during the trial, and learn about why Montrose Properties chose to intervene when they did.

Montrose Properties told the court Friday it had no idea of the potential impact on its own holdings until the judgement granting Cowichan Tribes Aboriginal title was published six months ago.

Since then, the company says a potential deal has been put on hold, with lenders leery to provide financing due to the uncertainty around land ownership.

The province has since put up \$150 million in financial backing for Montrose Properties and other property owners caught up in the case.

In court Friday, Montrose Properties lawyers categorized Cowichan's request of communications as an abuse of power – saying that for years Cowichan Tribes have asserted that landowners would not be impacted – accusing Cowichan of making contradicting arguments when it benefits them.

Cowichan Tribes' lawyer David Rosenberg, objected to that categorization, saying he never used language saying there would be no impact to private land ownership.

Rosenberg re-stated the Tribe's intention is not to invalidate private land ownership. He says the land title decision purely restructures the Cowichan-Crown relationship, and any impact on private ownership would be decided in future litigation.

The judge reserved her decision for a future date.

In the meantime, the Province is proactively preparing disclosure of communication that would be available to Montrose Properties under a Freedom Of Information request.

The court will decide whether to open up the case and let Montrose defend its interests and property in court at a later date.

Only Half of Canadians Know Risk Factors For Heart Disease: Report

By Katherine Ward For Global News

February 14, 2026

Katrina Sison was on her way to a volleyball game. But something felt off.

"I just had shortness of breath, like really bad shortness of breath. I decided to go to the emergency [room] instead," Sison said.

At 38, Sison, from Pickering, Ont., never suspected her heart might be in crisis. "I got the ECHO (echocardiogram) exam, and the cardiologist told me that I would have to do surgery that day or the next day."

St. Michael's Hospital cardiac surgeon Dr. Subodh Verma said Sison had an ascending aortic aneurysm that was close to eight centimetres and rapidly expanding.

"This is a catastrophic problem, and it was growing fast," Verma said. "They say time is muscle, but time was life for her — she was literally going to pass away if we had not operated on her."

Verma holds the Canada research chair in cardiovascular surgery and is used to managing close calls and difficult surgeries on the operating table.

Tom Scherbluk, 58, from Alliston, Ont., another one of Verma's patients, also had no clue anything was amiss with his health. Last summer, he got a wakeup call.

"I was at home, I was downstairs, just checking on some files, making sure that I was organized for the next day," Scherbluk recalled. "Suddenly I was just out of the chair, on the floor in absolute agony."

“We rapidly brought him to St. Michael’s Hospital, where ... I operated on him again almost all night to get him through,” Verma said. “We weren’t able to close his chest for the first few days because of the bleeding.”

Verma said undiagnosed high blood pressure was a contributing factor in Scherbluk’s episode, which ended up being diagnosed as an aortic dissection, a life-threatening tear in the aorta’s inner layers that causes blood to rush through, resulting in further splitting.

“That tear really progresses every hour and gets worse and can lead to sort of death within the first 24 to 48 hours. It can lead to disabling strokes, it can lead to a heart attack, it could lead to kidney damage. It is one of the most important emergencies that we attend to,” Verma said.

A new report from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada says more than 8.2 million adults have been diagnosed with high blood pressure.

According to the most current Canadian guidelines published in 2025, the definition of high blood pressure for adults is at or above 130/80 mm Hg. “Recent evidence shows a substantially increased cardiovascular risk starting at this revised threshold ... and is stricter than previously recommended,” the report states.

“Hypertension doesn’t usually have a lot of signs,” Verma explained. “That’s why people are sort of walking around not knowing that they could be at risk of an aortic dissection.”

Mahee Dharen Dharmalingam, 55, learned about his risk after his family doctor ordered an echocardiogram during a routine visit, which revealed an aneurysm.

“My family doctor said, given your age, you’re just on the borderline. I’m going to refer you to a cardiologist,” Dharmalingam said.

After being followed for some time, the aneurysm grew, and the situation became more critical. “They did several tests, and said, ‘Hey, we have to do this surgery as soon as possible,’” Dharmalingam said.

Doctors caution that heart disease does not always present itself the way people see it dramatized in movies or on TV.

“In reality, heart disease can take many shades and colours. Sometimes it can present acutely, sometimes it presents sort of insidiously, sometimes it can take different kinds of manifestations,” Verma said. “They don’t have risk factors; they don’t have traditional reasons to suspect that they may actually have such a significant problem. Oftentimes, regrettably, the first presentation is death.”

This Valentine’s Day, as matters of the heart are top of mind, Verma’s message is simple: Know your risk. Get checked out. Be vigilant.

“If you suspect that you have heart disease or you have risk factors or you have a family history, you know, attend with your family physician, attend with your specialist, you know, get yourself evaluated,” Verma said. “The heart is much more than a symbol of love; it is a symbol of life, it is life. And in that heart, as heart surgeons, we remain in awe of the absolutely remarkable organ that this is.”

Declaration Act is Not a Threat to Private Property: Clarifying False Linkages in the Media

UBCIC News Release February 5, 2026

Declaration Act is Not a Threat to Private Property: Clarifying False Linkages in the Media

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is deeply concerned about the confusion that has been created by recent media reporting and public commentary that incorrectly link the B.C. Supreme Court's findings on Aboriginal title in the Cowichan Tribes decision with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act).

In the Cowichan Tribes decision the court declared, for the first time, Aboriginal title is protected by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 over a partial claim area that includes privately held fee simple lands. In response, multiple sources have suggested that the Declaration Act must be amended to protect private property interests in B.C. This is categorically incorrect. The Declaration Act had nothing to do with the declarations made in the Cowichan Tribes decision.

Aboriginal title is not a new concept, nor one that was created by provincial legislation such as the Declaration Act. The Supreme Court of Canada recognized the existence of Aboriginal title in 1973 in *Calder v. British Columbia*. In 1997, it clarified that Aboriginal title is a constitutionally protected Aboriginal right to the land itself in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*. These historic cases were prior to adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration), and decades before the Province enacted the Declaration Act.

It is undisputed that B.C. was largely settled without the Crown making any attempt to enter treaties, agreements, or other constructive arrangements with First Nations with respect to their lands, territories, and resources pursuant to the requirements of British colonial law. The tension that persists between the co-existence of Aboriginal title and other land ownership in B.C. is a direct result of this inaction and the Province's refusal to adequately address the consequences of that inaction over the last century and a half. With or without the Declaration Act, unresolved questions will remain regarding the relationship between Aboriginal title and Crown granted tenures.

The Declaration Act is enabling legislation specifically designed to be a framework to address the uncertainties caused by the unresolved work of Confederation. The development and unanimous passing of the Declaration Act continues to provide an unprecedented opportunity for First Nations and all who call B.C. home. Substantive implementation of the Declaration Act – unamended – will enable us to move forward toward a better shared future in B.C.

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). <https://www.fnlc.ca/>

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Federal Court of Appeal Upholds Discovery Islands Fish Farm Decision: A Victory for Wild Salmon, Indigenous Rights, and the Precautionary Principle

UBCIC News Release January 30, 2026

Federal Court of Appeal Upholds Discovery Islands Fish Farm Decision: A Victory for Wild Salmon, Indigenous Rights, and the Precautionary Principle

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tseil Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – January 30, 2026) The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) welcomes the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal to dismiss the appeal brought by Mowi Canada West Inc. and other salmon farming companies challenging the federal Minister of Fisheries’ decision to decline renewal of aquaculture licenses in the Discovery Islands.

This decision follows the June 7, 2024 ruling of the Federal Court which also upheld the Minister’s decision. Together, these rulings confirm that the Minister acted reasonably, met the duty to consult, and was justified in applying a highly precautionary approach in an area critical to wild salmon and to the rights and livelihoods of First Nations.

For UBCIC, this outcome reflects years of consistent advocacy by First Nations leadership to protect wild salmon, uphold our inherent and constitutionally protected title and rights, and transition away from open net-pen aquaculture.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated, “This decision is a profound affirmation that the protection of wild salmon, Indigenous rights, and the precautionary principle must come before corporate interests. The courts have now twice confirmed that the Minister was right to reject the advice that would have kept these farms in place. This is exactly what First Nations have been saying for decades, that open net-pen fish farms pose unacceptable risks to migrating wild salmon and to our inherent responsibilities to protect them.”

UBCIC Chiefs have passed numerous resolutions opposing open net-pen aquaculture and calling for a transition to safer alternatives, including land-based closed containment, as well as supporting intervention in the Discovery Islands litigation as part of a First Nations coalition.

Chief Marilyn Slett, Secretary-Treasurer of the UBCIC, stated “the courts have recognized that when there is scientific uncertainty and serious risk to wild salmon, caution must prevail. This is the essence of the precautionary principle. It is also consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which affirms our authority to protect our lands, waters, and resources. This ruling strengthens the legal foundation for the ongoing transition away from open net-pen fish farms across the coast.”

Wild salmon from across British Columbia, including the Fraser River watershed, migrate through the Discovery Islands. UBCIC has long maintained that fish farms in this corridor create far-reaching impacts on the Title and Rights of many First Nations well beyond the immediate area.

Chief Dalton Silver, UBCIC political lead on fisheries, stated “This case has never been just about the Discovery Islands. It is about the migratory routes of wild salmon that connect our Nations from the coast to the interior.

The Court's decision recognizes that protecting this corridor is essential to the survival of wild salmon and to the cultures, food systems, and laws of our peoples. This is a critical step forward in the fish farm transition process."

UBCIC is calling on Fisheries and Oceans Canada to now apply the same precautionary approach confirmed by the courts to the rest of the coast as the federal government proceeds with its coast-wide open net-pen transition planning.

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Chief Dalton Silver - 604-751-0947

UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

For more information, please visit www.ubcic.bc.ca

FNLC Congratulates Tahltan Central Government, Tahltan Nation, and the Province on Eskay Mine Decision, Emphasizes Importance of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

UBCIC—FNLC News Release January 29, 2026

FNLC Congratulates Tahltan Central Government, Tahltan Nation, and the Province on Eskay Mine Decision, Emphasizes Importance of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) congratulates the Tahltan Central Government (TCG), the Tahltan Nation, and the Province on making regulatory decisions on the reopening of the Eskay Creek gold-silver mine through the first-ever consent-based agreement under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act).

This historic first demonstrates what can be accomplished when First Nation and Crown governments come together on a government-to-government basis to make decisions, and the important role the Declaration Act can play in facilitating growth and prosperity for the benefit of all who call B.C. home. The recognition of Tahltan's jurisdiction and decision-making authority in Tahltan Territory, and obtaining the TCG's consent, achieves the kind of certainty needed to attract investment and support sustainable development in this province, and ensures the local Nation participates in the associated benefits. The Declaration Act is not a problem to be fixed; it is an opportunity to be embraced.

In the words of TCG President Kerry Carlick, it is not a “good idea to take anything away from [the Declaration Act].”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated, “The momentous accomplishment of TCG and the Province is further proof of what we have known to be true since the Declaration Act’s unanimous passing in 2019: for any provincial government committed to implementing it as intended, the Declaration Act is a potent tool for progress and collective prosperity. It’s time to stop the divisive and counter-productive fear mongering and to get on with implementing the Declaration Act, as written. A growing list of more than 80 First Nations and First Nation Organizations have endorsed a joint statement calling for the Declaration Act to be upheld as passed into legislation in 2019.”

BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Terry Teegee, remarked, “This achievement is an empowering precedent for all B.C. First Nations and the Province. It is concrete precedent that should be repeated throughout our Territories. It demonstrates that with respect of our Nations’ jurisdictions and laws that we can deliver legal, economic, and investment certainty. Everything about us, with us. These regulatory decisions and Section 7 agreements, and the Impact Benefit Agreements with proponents are exactly what the Declaration Act was intended to uplift. This achievement should also silence false narratives that the Declaration Act is an obstacle to progressing resource development. With affected Nations treated as equal decision-makers, we all prosper and create an inspirational future for all generations.”

“The mining industry is and will continue to be an important driver of B.C.’s economy, and many First Nations want to play a central role in it,” stated Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. He added, “the Declaration Act provides us with a principled framework to enable First Nations, the Province, and mining proponents to work together to facilitate economic growth and secure economic independence while respecting the human rights of First Nations.”

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(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) Recreational participants in the Salmon Allocation Policy (SAP) review process have cultivated a dangerous and offensive online campaign through social media, websites and forums that spreads misinformation about First Nations' positions in the review process and what it may mean for non-Indigenous Canadians.

The SAP has been ongoing for several years in an effort to ensure that First Nations rights with respect to salmon allocation are being upheld by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Catalyzed by the Ahousaht et al. Decision, the SAP review process has been inclusive of non-Indigenous recreational and commercial representatives. The review process is governed by a Terms of Reference that specifically requires accuracy and transparency in the communications to constituents. Despite this clear directive, the campaign has cultivated an environment in which anti-Indigenous racism is thriving, creating the very real risk of physical and psychological damage for First Nations people.

BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated, "When campaigns of hate against First Nations are not actively and publicly opposed by our public servants at the highest level, racism becomes further entrenched in the minds of Canadians and in our institutions. It threatens the safety, wellbeing and livelihoods of First Nations people while legitimizing and contributing to racial division. We expect that DFO Minister Thompson deeply respects her obligations to fulfill First Nations fishing rights under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, UNDA and case law. Now is the time to demonstrate reconciliation in action and stand up to those wish to sow further division in Canada."

As the convener of this process and Crown entity, DFO is actively accountable for ensuring adherence to the Terms of Reference, application of the UN Declaration and reconciliation principles and respectful, Nation-to-Nation engagement. The FNLC calls on DFO Minister Thompson to immediately issue a statement that denounces, debunks and condemns these hateful actions that recreational fishing participants have taken. In the meantime, the risk of West Coast fish wars grows. Additionally, the Minister must not consider external submissions from recreational fishers, who may have been influenced by the recreational representatives' hate propaganda.

First Nations Summit Political Executive, Robert Phillips elaborated, "We are in a delicate time in Canada when it comes to reconciliation and now is not the time to regress in First Nations-settler relationships and Nation-to-Nation relationships. First Nations have been blowing the whistle throughout the SAP review process, alerting DFO to racist sentiments from recreational fishing representatives, which DFO has failed to combat. Our government partners must go to bat now for First Nations- they can no longer be silent bystanders while the risk of violence against First Nations people grows. The SAP review process can still be salvaged so long as DFO takes its responsibilities seriously."

UBCIC President Grand Chief Stewart Phillip concluded, "As our First Nations have always maintained- we are not greedy people. We want to share; we just need our rights to be upheld so that we are actually in the position to do so. First Nations prosperity and rights implementation do not come at a cost to non-Indigenous Canadians. The assertion that First Nations rights are taking away from the general public is a dangerous and false narrative that is fanning the flame of discrimination in B.C. and across Canada. We won't stand for it and expect that the Crown will not stand for it either."

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Assembly of First Nations National Chief Expresses Support for Plan Submitted to Human Rights Tribunal to Reform First Nations Child and Family Services

Published: Dec 22, 2025

(December 22, 2025 – Assembly of First Nations National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak expressed support in principle for the plan submitted today by the National Children’s Chiefs Commission (NCCC) and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (Caring Society) to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on long-term reform of First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS).

“Nothing is more important than our children,” said National Chief Woodhouse Nepinak. “And we want the government to place the same priority on First Nations children as we do. Today is the latest step in a long, too long, drawn out process. It’s time to take real action on comprehensive reform to ensure justice, fairness, safety and security for First Nations children.”

On August 20, 2025, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal issued order 2025 CHRT 80, calling on the AFN and other parties to the CHRT proceedings on discrimination in the FNCFS – including the federal government – to consult with First Nations leadership and experts to develop and submit a national plan to inform the CHRT’s decision making on reform of FNCFS. The national plans are due today.

First Nations-in-Assembly mandated the National Children’s Chiefs Commission to lead consultation and negotiations towards a final agreement on First Nations Child and Family Service (FNCFS) reform. Alongside the national plan, the AFN submission supports a region-by-region approach to long-term reform. The AFN Executive is united in its support for the Ontario Final Agreement and calls on Canada to support the release of funding without further delay.

“Now that the plans are submitted, AFN will review them and assess next steps,” said the National Chief. “We hope there are strong commonalities that value our children because our preference is to work collaboratively with the government. But make no mistake – we will continue to fight for our children if we have to. I thank the National Children’s Chiefs Commission and the Caring Society for their work to develop a national plan under challenging timelines.”

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is a national political and advocacy organization that works to advance the collective aspirations of First Nations individuals and communities across Canada on matters of national or international nature and concern.

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Growing anti-reconciliation sentiment around DRIPA, court rulings in B.C. has First Nations calling for a meeting with the premier

By Leanne Sanders For APTN NEWS

Feb 10, 2026

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) says more than 100 First Nation leaders and organizations have signed onto a statement demanding that Premier David Eby abide by the province's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIPA).

"We call on leaders and British Columbians alike to pause, reflect, and recognize the steady progress that has been made under the Declaration Act—and the healthier, more respectful relationships that have emerged because of it," the UBCIC statement says. "We call on Premier Eby to uphold the Declaration Act, resist calls to amend it or pursue appeals, and to sit down with Indigenous leadership to continue the work of building certainty, trust, and economic prosperity for everyone in British Columbia."

The statement adds that after court rulings "that reaffirm the crucial need to consult and negotiate, a negative narrative has begun to take hold."

"This narrative wrongly blames First Nations for uncertainty while ignoring the historical reality that British Columbia was largely settled without treaties. It replaces facts and experience with fear, and cooperation with division," the statement adds. On a number of occasions, Premier David Eby has suggested that the province will amend DRIPA in a way that would limit the role of the courts in the province's reconciliation efforts.

He first made the comments on Dec. 5, following a court victory where the British Columbia Court of Appeal found the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the provincial mineral claims regime are "inconsistent."

The appeal ruling says the provincial Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act should be "properly interpreted" to incorporate UNDRIP into the laws of B.C. with immediate legal effect. Following the ruling, Eby said his government will review the decision and will amend the provincial legislation if necessary.

Eby said the decision "potentially puts courts in the driver's seat instead of British Columbians."

"Too much rides on it in terms of our province's prosperity and certainty going forward. So, I think it just as likely or perhaps more likely that we would proceed with amendments to provide clarity around what was clearly intended when we introduced this legislation, and the court appears to have some confusion about that."

DRIPA is provincial legislation passed in 2019 to align B.C. laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). According to the B.C. government's website, the act requires it work with Indigenous Peoples to implement UNDRIP.

The act recognizes Indigenous nations inherent right to self-government, enabling them to create their own laws, institutions, and economic structures. It also gives First Nations legal standing with courts starting to turn to DRIPA in litigation. It also affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples to own, develop, and control traditional territories and aims to combat systemic racism in areas like healthcare.

'False linkages'

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) also issued a news release on Feb. 5 "clarifying false linkages" between DRIPA and the Cowichan Tribes Aboriginal title decision being reported in the media and through public commentary. ²¹

“In the Cowichan Tribes decision the court declared, for the first time, Aboriginal title protected by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 over a partial claim area that includes privately held fee simple lands,” the FNLC says. “In response, multiple sources have suggested that the Declaration Act must be amended to protect private property interests in B.C. This is categorically incorrect.”

UBCIC and other leaders are calling on the premier to resist calls to amend DRIPA or pursue appeals in the courts. They say the talk of amending DRIPA is “rooted in this fear-based response,” and are calling on Eby to sit down and talk with them.

While it’s not clear when that will happen, the province issued a letter of notification Jan. 29 inviting First Nations to participate in an expedited consultation and cooperation process subject to signing a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA). The leaders who signed an NDA received materials regarding potential amendments from the Province, according to the UBCIC.

Anti-Indigenous sentiment and pushback against Indigenous rights has been growing in the province since the Cowichan decision in August 2025. That’s when the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that the Cowichan tribes have Aboriginal title rights over a portion of the land on the Fraser River. The judge ruled that the granting of private titles by the province infringed on Cowichan title.

“The Province has no jurisdiction to extinguish Aboriginal title,” says a summary of the decision by B.C. Supreme Court Justice Barbara Young. “The Crown grants of fee simple interest did not displace or extinguish the Cowichan’s Aboriginal title...Aboriginal title lies beyond the land title system in British Columbia.”

The Cowichan reassured residents their settlement does not erase private property or “challenge the effectiveness or validity of any title held by individual private landowners.” That reassurance didn’t stop an appeal of the Cowichan Decision by the province. The City of Richmond, and the Musqueam Indian Band are also appealing the decision.

Politicians inflamed the debate. Richmond’s mayor sent out a letter telling residents their property was at risk because of the decision, prompting the Cowichan to issue a statement in late October to address the growing misinformation around the case.

First Nations say amendments to DRIPA “would not create certainty—they would slow progress, increase litigation, and grind projects to a halt as First Nations are once again forced to defend our rights and interests through the courts,” according to the joint statement.

The Canadian Bar Association BC Branch (CBABC) was also swift to condemn Eby’s intention to reopen debate on DRIPA and “limit British Columbians’ ability to bring their disputes before independent courts.” “Every British Columbian should be concerned about any attempt to restrict access to our independent courts as a means of resolving disputes,” the CBABC says in a Jan. 21 news release. “A government that plans to limit the courts’ role because it disagrees with judicial decisions should alarm us all. The government is not above the law.”

Indigenous organizations now dealing with more racist rhetoric

A coalition of First Nations along B.C.'s coast has also been fighting anti-Indigenous sentiment directed at them after they reaffirmed their opposition to a bitumen pipeline through their territory, something that an MOU signed in November between Ottawa and Alberta was intended to lay the foundation for.

It has led Coastal First Nations (CFN) to call on one B.C. Conservative leadership candidate to apologize for what it calls a smear campaign against them. CFN wants Yuri Fulmer, an Australian born businessman running for the leadership to remove a post on X that it says "includes visual references to flag-burning, hateful anti-Semitic rhetoric, protestors, and resource projects that have nothing to do with CFN leadership, its member communities, or align with its purpose."

According to the CFN, "This is a new low and shows the depths people like Yuri Fulmer are willing to go when they have nothing substantive to say."

"Mr. Fulmer should be ashamed of spreading the kind of disinformation and propaganda we've come to expect from politicians in the US, not here in Canada," says Marilyn Slett, the president of CFN and elected chief of the Heiltsuk Nation.

"Spreading this type of disinformation sows division between First Nations and other British Columbians and serves to further inflame existing tensions. In a time of heightened political conflict across the continent, this is irresponsible and dangerous and could result in real harm to our communities. It is also very hypocritical," Slett tells APTN News in an interview.

"To see these very right-wing videos and things being said about us-it harms Indigenous people. And, you know, it can cause violence against our people. British Columbians and Canada deserve better than that."

"Mr. Fulmer – and others who have intentionally amplified and shared this type of disinformation – should apologize to our leadership and our community members and immediately correct or remove it. British Columbians deserve better," Slett says.

It's not the first time CFN has been criticized since it staunchly defended its position against a bitumen pipeline going through its territory to reach foreign markets. It's been vocal in its opposition to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Ottawa and Alberta, and is gathering names on a petition to send to the Carney government against lifting the moratorium on oil tankers through coastal waters.

Leader of the federal Conservative Party of Canada, Pierre Poilievre described the CFN as an "anti-pipeline group that doesn't speak for the communities in a Jan. 16 Facebook post. It included a link to a column from the National Post that argued CFN does not hold a veto over pipelines.

Dallas Smith, who founded the Nanwakolas Council, and once served on the CFN argued while appearing on a recent series on the "Resource Works" podcast that some advocacy groups including those opposing resource projects are exploiting "hereditary authority" to create conflicts with elected band councils.

The leaders who have signed the UBCIC statement say repealing DRIPA risks "pulling all who call B.C. home back to a time of blame, conflict, increased litigation, and threats of violence against Indigenous peoples."

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