



# BC Hydro's United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Plan

BC Hydro acknowledges that our infrastructure is located on land where First Nations peoples have title and rights, and have resided since time immemorial. We recognize that BC Hydro's system and operations have affected the land, and we share a responsibility to act as stewards for the land.

 **BC Hydro**  
Power smart





As members of BC Hydro's Board of Directors, we are responsible for providing strategic direction and oversight to BC Hydro. It is important that this direction includes a commitment to implement the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. With this plan, we set out the actions BC Hydro will take to meet the standards in the Declaration on our path towards reconciliation and ensuring First Nations have full enjoyment of their inherent title and rights in this province.

Reconciliation starts with the truth, and it also starts with the land. The truth is that BC Hydro operates on lands where First Nations people have lived for generations, and those operations have negatively impacted us. It is time for the company to take tangible, meaningful actions that will allow us to flourish and grow on this land together. It will not be easy, and this plan will not be perfect, but the actions BC Hydro proposes to take around respectful relations, social and cultural well-being, decision-making, water, lands and the environment, and economic relations represent a significant step in the right direction.

It is a step that BC Hydro will take together with First Nations people. Our approach must be based on collaboration and relationship-building. We must build relationships based on respect, based on working and walking forward together, and strengthening each other. BC Hydro's projects will be made stronger by incorporating First Nations knowledge and guidance, and First Nations people can grow from the opportunities and benefits a large organization with a province-wide reach can provide. We look forward to working in partnership with First Nations people to incorporate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into our business.

Nalaine Morin, Tahltan Nation  
Board Director

Chief Clarence Louie, Osoyoos Indian Band  
Board Director



BC Hydro is working to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples across our business.

As a public utility, BC Hydro provides an essential service to British Columbians and plays an important role in the economy of the Province. However, constructing and operating our system has left lasting impacts on Indigenous peoples, cultures, traditions and ways of life which we deeply regret. Most of BC Hydro's power system was built before Aboriginal rights and title were recognized in Canada and the presence of our infrastructure continues to affect our relationships with Indigenous peoples today.

BC Hydro's journey to advance reconciliation started in the early 1990s when we created an Indigenous Relations team with the long-term goal to build positive and mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations. It is important that these relationships be based on respect for Aboriginal title and rights, treaty rights, self-determination, and self-governance. Seeing relationships with First Nations repaired and strengthened has been one of the most gratifying experiences of my career at BC Hydro. And I am excited by the opportunities that having strong relationships will allow us to explore with Nations going forward, including economic reconciliation through equity participation in the renewable energy sector and asset co-ownership.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission defines reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and calls on governments and organizations such as BC Hydro to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the UN Declaration) as "the framework for reconciliation". Having a plan to incorporate the principles of the UN Declaration into our business will help us build on the foundation of our work to date and continue to work in collaboration with First Nations to make progress in advancing reconciliation.

We recognize the importance of being transparent in how we are incorporating the UN Declaration into our business and, most importantly, partnering with Indigenous peoples on this work to make reconciliation meaningful. We have relationships with First Nations across the Province and each relationship has its own history and context. Our plan is therefore not a one-size-fits-all approach but can be adapted to different relationships and circumstances. Building relationships with Indigenous peoples and Nations most impacted by our presence in their territories will continue to be a focus of BC Hydro's work and will inform how we advance reconciliation.

The goal of this implementation plan is to identify the concrete actions we have been taking and will take going forward together with First Nations to incorporate the principles of the UN Declaration into our business. It is intended to complement our **Statement of Indigenous Principles** and BC Hydro's Five-Year Strategy, which includes the goal of advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. This plan is a living document that will evolve as we continue to consult and co-operate with Indigenous peoples.

Incorporating the UN Declaration into our business requires us to make continued efforts to strengthen our relationships by rethinking how we work with and relate to Indigenous peoples. Change is not easy—this is a long-term effort that will require ongoing partnership, focus, creativity, commitment and leadership. As these conversations progress, so too will BC Hydro's approach.

President and CEO, Chris O'Riley



<sup>1</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #92.

# Introduction and context

Here's a look at how the UN Declaration has evolved in Canada and British Columbia over recent decades and into today.

**1982**

## Section 35(1) Constitution Act

Section 35 is a part of Canada's Constitution that recognizes and affirms "the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada." Reconciliation is an objective of section 35.

**2010**

## Canada endorses the UN Declaration with qualifications

**2007**

## The UN Declaration completed after decades of work by National governments (including Canada) and Indigenous peoples

The UN Declaration is a United Nations declaration identifying human rights and fundamental freedoms, applied in the specific context of Indigenous peoples.

**2015**

## Truth and Reconciliation Commission releases 94 Calls to Action

Organized by the parties of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the Commission's purpose was to document the history and lasting impacts of the Canadian Indian residential school system on Indigenous peoples in Canada. In 2015, they released 94 Calls to Action regarding reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

**2016**

## Canada fully endorses the UN Declaration





## 2018

### Draft Guiding principles released provincially

B.C. releases ten draft principles to provide high-level guidance on how provincial representatives engage with Indigenous peoples. They are modeled on principles introduced by the federal government.

## 2017

### B.C. government announces it will be a full supporter of the UN Declaration

## 2017

### Guiding principles released federally

Canada releases a set of ten principles to guide the review of laws, policies and operational practices and form a foundation for transforming how the federal government partners with and supports Indigenous peoples and governments.

## 2019

### B.C. government passes the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)

Legislation to implement the UN Declaration in B.C. DRIPA requires that B.C. takes steps to align its laws with the UN Declaration and create an action plan to implement the UN Declaration in B.C.

## 2021

### Canada passes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act

Legislation to implement the UN Declaration at the federal level. The Act affirms that the UN Declaration can help interpret and apply Canadian law.

## 2022

### B.C. government publishes its DRIPA action plan

B.C. government's action plan to meet the objectives of the UN Declaration over time. It outlines proposed actions to be taken in cooperation with Indigenous peoples between 2022 and 2027.



## The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and how it relates to our work

The UN Declaration is a United Nations declaration identifying human rights and fundamental freedoms applied in the specific context of Indigenous peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action call on governments and organizations to adopt the UN Declaration as the framework for reconciliation in Canada. Starting in 2017, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources' mandate letters to the Chair of BC Hydro have directed BC Hydro to incorporate the UN Declaration and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action into our business, as appropriate given the specific mandate and context of our organization.

As a public utility, BC Hydro's mandate is to safely provide reliable, affordable, clean electricity to our customers. BC Hydro provides an essential service for its customers across British Columbia. We also have a responsibility to ensure that we operate in a way that respects the rights of Indigenous peoples. Advancing reconciliation in our business involves building and maintaining respectful relationships that help us understand Indigenous interests and respect Indigenous rights while also delivering on our mandate as a public utility.

Our infrastructure and operations are located on land where First Nations peoples have resided since time

immemorial and have affected the land and resources on which they rely. Some First Nations have borne a disproportionate share of these impacts. In incorporating the principles of the UN Declaration in our business, we will continue to focus our efforts on advancing reconciliation with the First Nations most impacted by our business, while also remaining committed to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples across the province broadly.

### Our plan is a living document

This document is BC Hydro's action plan to incorporate the principles of the UN Declaration and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action into our business. It is a living document that will be updated periodically to align with BC Hydro's relationships with individual Nations, changes in law, First Nations' feedback, and the evolving context of Indigenous relations in B.C. (including changes resulting from the implementation of DRIPA) and Canada. We will assess and report out on our progress regularly. If you have an idea for improving the plan, let us know at [UNDRIPPlan@bchydro.com](mailto:UNDRIPPlan@bchydro.com).

## Engagement on the plan—what we heard

To ensure that our plan reflects the priorities of Indigenous peoples and the ways BC Hydro can best support those priorities, BC Hydro worked collaboratively with Indigenous peoples to develop it. Starting in spring 2021, we engaged on the plan's proposed themes and actions through both our Province-wide Integrated Resource Plan and several rounds of targeted workshops with the Nations most impacted by our existing assets and planned activities. We received hundreds of comments that informed the plan. A more detailed report on what we heard, and how we incorporated that feedback into the plan, can be found on our website at [bchydro.com](https://www.bchydro.com).

### How does BC Hydro's plan relate to actions the Province is taking to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act?

BC Hydro is a Crown corporation. The Province has taken an important step forward in advancing reconciliation with the passage of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and development of a Declaration Act Action Plan. BC Hydro has developed our own Implementation Plan because there are specific actions we can take that are not included in the Province's plan. However, we will also support the broader work of the Province and Indigenous peoples to advance actions under the Declaration Act Action Plan where that work relates to our business to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration over time.



# BC Hydro's UN Declaration and TRC Calls to Action Implementation Plan

In the context of our business and work with Indigenous peoples, there are five broad themes around which we will take action in collaboration with First Nations and Indigenous peoples to implement the principles of the UN Declaration, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and to advance reconciliation. These themes are:



**Respectful relations**



**Social and cultural well-being**



**Decision-making**



**Water, land, and environment**



**Economic relations**

We recognize that these themes are not watertight compartments—there are links between the themes, and actions listed under one theme might also advance reconciliation under another theme.

The remaining sections of this plan outline how these five themes relate to the UN Declaration (and include references to the articles in the UN Declaration which we have drawn from), set out BC Hydro's focus areas within each theme, and identify the actions BC Hydro is taking in collaboration with First Nations and Indigenous peoples.



Two totems were installed at the John Hart generating station to mark our relationship progress with We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum





**Respectful relations**



# 1. Respectful relations

Articles addressing respectful relations can be found throughout the UN Declaration. The articles in the UN Declaration that speak to respectful relations recognize and confirm the need to respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples. This has not always been the case in Canada, and Indigenous people have experienced hardship and discrimination which continues today.

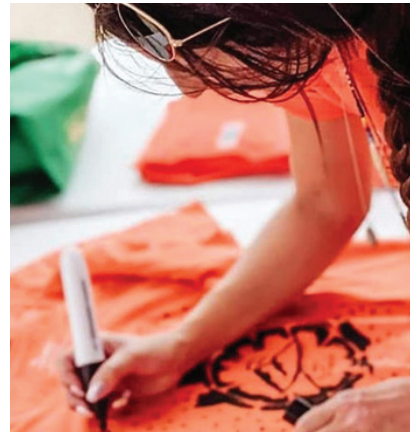
BC Hydro affirms our intent to build relationships with Indigenous peoples based on respect, recognition and exercise of title and rights, self-determination, and self-governance. To develop respectful relationships, BC Hydro employees and contractors must understand the disadvantages and discrimination that Indigenous peoples have endured and continue to endure. Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 92 calls on organizations to provide education for management and staff on the history and modern context of Indigenous peoples.

The following actions will help BC Hydro build respectful relations with Indigenous peoples:

- 1.1** Creating introductory and advanced level training programs for employees and contractors that build greater awareness of Indigenous peoples' history in Canada, knowledge of the UN Declaration and the TRC Calls to Action, and the context of BC Hydro's work with, and impact on, Indigenous peoples and Nations. Target having 80% of BC Hydro employees complete the introductory and/or advanced level training by the end of fiscal year 2026.
- 1.2** Increasing understanding and awareness of BC Hydro's employees and contractors working in an individual First Nations' territory through Nation-specific and Nation-led training and awareness initiatives.
- 1.3** Acknowledge the First Nations and their lands and territories on which we operate.
- 1.4** Co-develop long-term Relationship Agreements that advance reconciliation with the First Nations who are most impacted by our infrastructure.

## Respectful relations

Articles 1, 2, 7, 17, and 22



Secwépmc and Syilx artist Kel-c Jules signs a tee shirt she designed for Orange Shirt Day

## Acknowledging where we operate

There are many ways to acknowledge the Indigenous lands on which BC Hydro operates. Initiatives in this area may include naming assets or sites in Indigenous languages, and co-designing areas of our properties or assets to incorporate Indigenous art and cultures.



**Social and cultural  
well-being**



## 2. Social and cultural well-being

Indigenous peoples' social and cultural well-being is a recurring theme of many articles of the UN Declaration. Given the ties between water, land and the environment and Indigenous rights, title, and cultural practices, BC Hydro's operations have had a deep impact on Indigenous peoples' social and cultural well-being. In order to advance reconciliation in light of these impacts, we must support Indigenous peoples in rebuilding that well-being. As a large organization that is visible across the province, we are well-positioned to highlight and support social and cultural well-being, which we will do by working together with Indigenous peoples on the following areas:

- 2.1** Renewing cultural heritage protection practices through co-management with Indigenous peoples of heritage resources and ancestral remains sites affected by BC Hydro projects and operations.
- 2.2** Collaborating on the development, maintenance, and usage of Indigenous languages in joint communications materials and at BC Hydro facilities.
- 2.3** Co-developing methodologies to evaluate community and cultural well-being in cumulative effects assessments and project impact studies.
- 2.4** Co-developing codes of conduct for BC Hydro sites to mitigate impacts to surrounding Indigenous communities.
- 2.5** Supporting initiatives related to the practice and revitalization of Indigenous cultures through social investments.
- 2.6** Collaborating with Indigenous peoples and First Nations to realize social and economic benefits associated with improving energy performance in their homes, businesses and community buildings through our energy management programs.

### Social and cultural well-being

Articles 3, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 24



Saulteau First Nations culture camp

### Investing in Indigenous culture

Supporting Indigenous cultural initiatives can take many different forms, and will always be driven by the needs of individual Nations. In the past, we have sponsored cultural events, purchased and displayed Indigenous art at BC Hydro facilities, and supported Indigenous plantings at BC Hydro sites. What ideas do you have for cultural investments?



# Decision-making



### 3. Decision-making

There are a number of articles in the UN Declaration which emphasize Indigenous self-determination and self-governance in decision-making, and involving Indigenous peoples more closely in decisions that affect them. We consult with First Nations about our project, operational and strategic decisions, but going forward, we will seek to do more to collaborate with Nations with the goal of securing consent for our work. While we expect that our approach will evolve over time through experience and the lessons we learn together with First Nations, we're focusing on the following areas:

- 3.1** Co-developing processes that enable greater Indigenous participation in decision-making and are designed to seek First Nations' free, prior and informed consent to BC Hydro's projects and initiatives, to support Indigenous self-determination and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in decision-making as described in the UN Declaration.
- 3.2** Co-developing procedures designed to ensure the prompt and fair resolution of any conflicts between BC Hydro and First Nations.
- 3.3** Greater involvement and collaboration in planning, including multi-year regional planning and at the earliest stages of BC Hydro projects.
- 3.4** Co-designing and supporting processes that accommodate the work of Indigenous decision-making governance institutions and structures.

#### Decision-making

Articles 4, 18, 19, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 40



Indigenous dancers at BC Hydro's National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations

#### Decision-making processes aimed at consent

BC Hydro makes a variety of decisions every day in order to operate our business. As part of our commitment to advancing reconciliation, we are proposing to co-develop processes with First Nations to increase their participation in decision-making, with the goal of obtaining consent. These processes could include consultation, relationship-based collaboration, shared decision-making, and consent agreements. We look forward to exploring these opportunities with First Nations.



# Water, land and environment



## 4. Water, land and environment

Many articles of the UN Declaration focus on the Indigenous relationship to water, land and the environment. BC Hydro utilizes water to generate electricity for our customers and develops projects on the land for the transmission and distribution of that electricity. These activities have had, and will continue to have, impacts on water, land and the environment, and to Indigenous rights and title. Stewardship and protection of water, land and the environment is a sacred responsibility of Indigenous people, and Indigenous ways of life and cultures are intrinsically linked to the existence of healthy land, water and the environment.

To mitigate ongoing impacts, and build a more collaborative approach for the future, BC Hydro will undertake the following actions with respect to our use of water, land and environment:

- 4.1** Learning about Indigenous knowledge and methodologies around water, land and environment and collaborating to include Indigenous expertise, knowledge, and reverence for water into our decision-making processes.
- 4.2** Co-designing new approaches to minimize the environmental and archaeological impacts of BC Hydro activities and that also contribute to addressing past and ongoing impacts.
- 4.3** Exploring opportunities for environmental enhancements and archaeological site protections through BC Hydro's projects and programs.
- 4.4** Seeking consent and consensus on water use and watershed planning.
- 4.5** Collaborating on the design and implementation of aquatic restoration programs and activities addressing fish and fish habitat.
- 4.6** Expanding opportunities for environmental stewardship by Indigenous peoples related to our projects and operations.
- 4.7** Supporting the restoration of land ownership, stewardship and protection by First Nations through property dispositions, leasing and other land-related initiatives.

The Peace Region Electricity Supply Project involved the construction of two new parallel 230kV transmission lines in the Peace Region. British Columbia Treaty 8 First Nations expressed interest in being involved early on and throughout the reclamation planning process. Prior to construction, a pilot project to develop a culturally appropriate reclamation approach was developed by First Nations. As part of the pilot, First Nations conducted pre-clearing surveys in key project areas to assist in reclaiming the area with native plant species. BC Hydro used First Nations designated businesses in planning and implementing the work, which included procuring and propagating native plants at a local First Nations owned greenhouse.

### Water, land and environment

Articles 10, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 32



The Our Story, Our Voice gallery at W.A.C. Bennett Dam Visitor Centre

### Reducing and Addressing Impacts

How can BC Hydro reduce the impacts of our activities? We are open to a range of options, from jointly developing a long-term approach to cumulative effects management to aquatic restoration activities to greater cooperation on planning and impact studies for projects. We look forward to co-developing specific actions with First Nations in the years to come.





# Economic relations



## 5. Economic relations

Several articles of the UN Declaration focus on Indigenous peoples' economic development. Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 92 also calls for organizations to ensure Indigenous people have equitable access to jobs and training opportunities and gain long-term sustainable benefits from development projects. BC Hydro is committed to economic reconciliation in ways that are significant and may even represent new ways of doing business for us, such as through calls for power and Indigenous co-ownership of BC Hydro assets. To advance sustainable and lasting reconciliation BC Hydro will seek to support First Nations economic aspirations where they align with and support the needs of BC Hydro's business. We will focus on the following areas with respect to economic relations:

- 5.1** Continuing to provide directed procurement opportunities for Indigenous designated businesses, including expanding opportunities on the operational side of our business where our most significant infrastructure footprint is located. Our directed procurement approach is focused on the First Nations with agreements where our most significant infrastructure footprint is located because these are the First Nations that have been most impacted by our business.
- 5.2** Supporting Indigenous procurement by providing opportunities and programs, such as our First Nations Contractor Program.
- 5.3** Increasing Indigenous employment at BC Hydro to 5% by fiscal year 2026 (from fiscal year 2021 baseline).
- 5.4** Supporting employment and training at BC Hydro for Indigenous peoples through programs that increase opportunities for Indigenous employment and career growth, such as the Indigenous Professionals in Development and Try-a-Trade programs.
- 5.5** Exploring new economic opportunities for Indigenous peoples related to our business. This may include exploring the potential for Indigenous co-ownership of electrical infrastructure such as new BC Hydro radial transmission lines and customer connections.
- 5.6** Collaborating with the Province and First Nations on economic opportunities which may arise from the Indigenous Clean Energy Opportunities engagement process.
- 5.7** Exploring opportunities to address First Nations' interests in revenue sharing, in alignment with the new fiscal framework currently being co-developed by the Province and Indigenous peoples.
- 5.8** Supporting Indigenous economic partnerships and benefits in the renewable energy sector through collaboration on future calls for power.

### Economic relations

Articles 3, 20, 21, 23 and 26



Xaxli'p student and BC Hydro scholarship recipient completes computing science degree

### True economic partnerships

BC Hydro's evolving business context is providing new opportunities to move the dial on Indigenous economic reconciliation. Indigenous co-ownership of BC Hydro assets will create deep partnerships where Nations have a significant degree of control over what happens on their land and receive benefits from those activities. Similarly, future calls for power may create substantial economic development opportunities. Including First Nations as partners, owners, and shareholders provides a clear path to achieve economic self-determination real leverage in how and when projects proceed.

## Conclusion

This plan sets out how BC Hydro is incorporating the principles of the UN Declaration and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action into our business and implementing our commitment to reconciliation. In the context of our business, we will work with Indigenous peoples to advance respectful relations, social and cultural well-being, decision-making, stewardship of water, land and the environment, and economic relations. We will take concrete actions designed to meet specific targets in these areas, which will be embedded into business documents such as our 5-Year Strategy and Service Plan to ensure accountability. We will take into account the unique and varied relationships we have with First Nations across the province, ensuring our actions are commensurate with the varying levels of impact our business has on different First Nations. We will report on our progress and update this plan periodically, in collaboration with First Nations, as the context of Indigenous relations in B.C. continues to evolve and to ensure continued alignment with applicable provincial legislation and policy.

## Acknowledgments

We are very grateful to all the Indigenous people who contributed to the development of this plan. Your time, ideas and advice have been, and will continue to be, incredible valuable. We look forward to continuing our journey to advance true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

We would also like to thank artists Tiernan Short and Bert Peters for their beautiful cover art design. Tiernan and Bert belong to Nations Creations, an Indigenous-owned and operated manufacturer and platform for Indigenous artists located on unceded Stó:lō territory which encapsulates the beauty of its surroundings through its Indigenous artisan-created pieces.



