



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

Inside this issue

List of Paid Support
Fees

2

Social Media/Mental
Health in Kids & Teens

3-5

Orange Shirts Banned
from Ont. Legislature

5-6

Healing Centre Near
Kamloops

7

FN To Manage 52,000
Hectares/Clayoquot

7-9

Eby Seeks Joint Path
on BC Indigenous Law

10-11

Pgs. 12-13: Squamish Nation Will De-
fend Rights, Title

Pgs. 14-15: FN Group: We've Had
Enough Secrets

Pgs. 15-18: AUBUT: How BC Broke
Canada's Land Compact

Pg. 18: BC Gives FNs on VI Funding For
Clean-Energy Projects

Pgs. 19-21: 30 Women and Girls
'Violently' Killed in Canada So Far In
2026: Femicide Observatory

Pg. 22: Nisga'a Nation Members: LNG
Projects

Pg. 23: UBCIC New Release: UNHRC
Back Page:

CRISIS HELP LINE INFORMATION
Annual Elders Gathering Info

BCECCS GRATITUDE LIST

Support Fee from October 01, 2025–September 30, 2026

**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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Social Media and Mental Health in Children and Teens

From Johns Hopkins Medicine

Many people, including children and teens, turn to social media for entertainment, news and connection with others. Nearly half of teens interviewed in a recent survey say they use the internet “almost constantly,” and 9 in 10 teens use social media daily. Though most social media platforms have a required minimum age of 13, almost 40% of children between the ages of 8 and 12 use social media.

Some experts believe that mental health concerns may be an unexpected side effect of increased social media use. While the link between the two is still being researched, it’s becoming more important to monitor the way children and teens use social media and its effects.

Carol Vidal, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., child and adolescent psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Children’s Center, and Jennifer Katzenstein, Ph.D., co-director of the Center for Behavioral Health at Johns Hopkins All Children’s Hospital, talk about what is known of social media’s effects on mental health in children and teens.

How does social media affect mental health in children and teens?

Positive Effects of Social Media on Children and Teens

In some ways, social media can benefit mental health. For instance, it provides access to information that might be unavailable elsewhere, as well as a safe place to express oneself. Many teens find a community online that helps them through difficult times, breaking through barriers that would normally exist, such as distance or shyness in approaching others.

In addition, many children and teens can find support using social media. For instance, many social media platforms encourage help-seeking behaviors, such as:

- Helping initiate mental health care
- Affirming sexual identities
- Providing social support
- Providing a buffering effect against stress

“Social media can be used in ways that may be beneficial,” says Vidal. “For example, many children and teens may find a community that is more accepting of who they are and their identities than their immediate family or school environment. In that sense, social media can facilitate connection with peers who share interests, identities and abilities. Realistically, it is also the way many young people communicate with each other these days.”

Negative Effects of Social Media on Children and Teens

In spite of the many benefits of social media, when used in excess, there are drawbacks. The United States Surgeon General released a social media advisory in 2023 about social media and mental health. According to the advisory, evidence suggests that social media has potential to harm the mental health of children and adolescents. The advisory indicates that frequent social media use could be associated with changes in parts of the brain related to emotions and learning. Additionally, it can affect impulse control, social behavior, emotional regulation and sensitivity to social punishments and rewards.

There is also some correlation between social media use and common mental health concerns. One of the most common interrelationships is between social media and depression. “Research has demonstrated that there are high rates of depression with very low social media use and very high social media use, demonstrating that there is a ‘sweet spot’ of use for each child that is often specific to their own developmental level and protective factors,” Katzenstein says.

Social Media and Depression in Children and Teens

Recent research indicates that those who spend more time on social media tend to show more symptoms of depression. However, there could be a number of reasons for this association.

Social isolation: Today’s children and teens spend less time connecting with friends and family in person compared with past generations. Instead, many use social media to connect, which can leave them feeling just as isolated. Online social interactions may not be as rewarding. Social media may also make some feel excluded or like they’re missing out when seeing others engage in activities and social interactions.

Lack of healthy activities: Time spent on social media may lead to a lack of healthy activities. Physical activity and time spent outdoors help release endorphins, which can help alleviate symptoms of depression. They can also provide a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

Lack of sleep: Research indicates that sleep deprivation is a common contributor to depression, and social media can have a notable impact on sleep. Scrolling on social media can lead to stress, which can make it hard to sleep. Additionally, people of every age can get stuck in a pattern where they only intend to look through social media for a few minutes and end up in it for more than an hour. Combine these habits with the blue light from electronic screens, which interferes with sleep patterns, and it’s easy to see how social media use before bed can lead to sleep deprivation.

“Depression is complex and has many risk factors, including a genetic predisposition, aspects of the surrounding environment and personal experiences, which are not so directly related to social media use patterns,” says Vidal. “Research is showing that those who are more depressed tend to use social media more, and vice versa. But it is not clear that the cause of depression is social media use.”

“However,” Vidal continues, “excessive social media use is associated with behaviors, such as poor sleep, increased social comparisons, impact on learning, and exposure to cyberbullying and negative content, that could contribute to the worsening of depressive symptoms.”

Further, depression and suicidality have increased as the number of people on social media, and the number of social media platforms, have increased. Katzenstein reminds us that this is correlational not causal, but it cannot be overlooked as a factor in adolescent and teen mental health.

Teaching Children and Teens to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media

Parents can work with their children to create healthy digital habits and encourage moderation in its use. Discussing the negative effects with children and teens to raise awareness can help manage the effects. Parents (and health providers and schools) may want to suggest the following strategies:

- Take regular breaks from digital devices.
- Turn off notifications.
- Establish phone-free hours and spaces.
- Discuss appropriate boundaries and behaviors when interacting online.

Parents can help by modeling these behaviors in their own social media use. Children and teens are more likely to emulate what they see, rather than what they are told. Fostering a healthy relationship with social media in the parents' lives can lead to healthier habits for the family as a whole.

"Learning to have a healthy relationship with social media is as important as learning to have healthy relationships with food, exercise and coffee consumption," explains Vidal. "Delaying the purchase of smartphones until the child is ready is a good first step. But, it is also important to instill healthy habits in children's use of screens given that technology — and social media in particular — will be present throughout their lives."

Katzenstein elaborates, "It's important for us as parents to model healthy social media use and discuss social media citizenship behaviors with our children, to ensure we are not posting anything we wouldn't say directly to someone in the 'real world'."

Orange 'Every Child Matters' shirts banned from Queen's Park legislature

'I was just wearing a t-shirt that was important to me and my family,' says Espen Forest

By Jon Thompson, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A northern Ontario MPP submitted a formal complaint to Queen's Park's house speaker on Thursday after security wouldn't allow observers into the gallery wearing an "Every Child Matters" T-shirt, and in another case, a sewn patch of the Transgender pride flag.

Thunder Bay-Superior North NDP MPP Lise Vaugeois sent speaker Donna Skelly a letter requesting clarity on whether the message arising from the discovery of First Nations child grave sites on the grounds of former residential schools should be interpreted as a political protest.

"Every Child Matters is a statement that should not be discouraged, in fact, it is a powerful message of support for those missing and murdered Indigenous children," Vaugeois wrote, citing similar messaging that is displayed in Queen's Park's public reception rooms.

“If you could make a definitive ruling on these forms of representation to clear up any misunderstanding, it would be greatly appreciated.”

Queen’s Park policy is to ban all “political statements” inside the provincial legislature. Last June, security removed several protesters from the gallery following the majority-Progressive Conservative government passing its controversial Bill 5 mining law. Later that summer, security initially interpreted wilderness firefighters wearing their uniforms in the gallery as a political protest but the speaker resolved it and they were allowed to observe.

In 2024, former MPP Sarah Jama was removed and banned from the legislature when she refused to remove her keffiyeh. Jama argued at the time that the ban on political statements is “racist” because it targets deeply meaningful cultural clothing, such as the keffiyeh.

This week, the Premier’s Office ordered the outdoor statues to be wrapped and protected from vandalism in anticipation of protests. Police have been monitoring those demonstrations on horseback.

Elected members wear “Every Child Matters” shirts in the Legislature every Sept. 30 to recognize the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

Vaugeois, who has an “Every Child Matters” flag hanging in her office, was writing on behalf of Espen Forest and their partner Emma Johnston.

As a former member of the Legislative Page program, Forest was familiar with decorum expectations in the gallery, but it didn’t occur to them that their T-shirt message was interpretable as political. They were surprised when security guards summoned a supervisor, who pointed to the policy that disallowed visible “materials with political or offensive slogans, including clothing.”

Security provided them with a white T-shirt to wear over top of their “Every Child Matters” shirt.

Forest is non-Indigenous but they participate in ceremony, and they have an aunt who is First Nations, as well as two cousins who are Inuit.

“I didn’t wear it with any intention of making a political statement,” they said. “I was just wearing a T-shirt that was important to me and my family. But if you think about what it actually means, if they gave me a white T-shirt and I wrote, ‘Children deserve to live,’ on it, would that be allowed?”

The pair were attending Question Period due to their interest in announced cuts to the Ontario Student Assistance Program. Forest, who is a member of the NDP, echoed Vaugeois’ call for the speaker to lead security on what messages constitute political protest.

“The fact that it’s just left to the discretion of whoever’s there to determine whether or not that’s a political or offensive slogan, I feel like operating on that basis is not only unfair to members of the public who are trying to be here, but it’s also legally unfounded in terms of uniformity and making sure things stay consistent,” they said.

QUOTE

“Your Actions + Your Choices = Your Life”

Healing centre near Kamloops aims to be safe space for residential school survivors

\$12.5M project aims to be open in the fall, according to Tk'emlúps Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir
CBC News · Posted: Mar 23, 2026

WARNING: This story details experiences at residential schools.

A healing house on the shore of the South Thompson River near Kamloops, B.C., is taking shape to create a safe space for residential school survivors looking to heal from trauma.

The \$12.5-million project is funded by the federal government, and sits on over 10 hectares of land on the outskirts of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc reserve.

Kúkpi7 (Chief) Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc said the roundhouse-style building will offer day programs and services for elders and nation members, as well as an area for food preservation and space to grow medicinal plants.

The CBC's Shelley Joyce took a tour of the large, airy, space with Casimir, and discovered how the healing centre aims to help people through traditional ceremonies and more.

A national 24-hour Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available at 1-866-925-4419 for emotional and crisis referral services for survivors and those affected.

Mental health counselling and crisis support are also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the Hope for Wellness hotline at 1-855-242-3310 or by online chat.

First Nations on Vancouver Island to manage 52,000 hectares of Clayoquot Sound forest

Nations look to balance economic opportunity with preserving invaluable land
Brenna Owen · The Canadian Press · Posted: Mar 22, 2026

Tyson Atleo, a hereditary leader of the Ahousaht First Nation, says the creation of three new forestry areas to be managed by his community and two others on the west coast of Vancouver Island marks the realization of a long-standing promise.

Atleo recalls assuring the community more than 15 years ago that "we would find a pathway forward to regaining control over some of our forest resources."

The vision is to manage the forests of Clayoquot Sound, a globally recognized biosphere that includes Tofino, B.C., in a way that reflects the nation's interest in ecological integrity and balance it with access to economic opportunity, he said.

The total combined area of the three new tree farm licenses is about 52,000 hectares, with Ahousaht set to manage about 33,000 hectares, Atleo said.

The areas were previously part of a single, larger licence with harvesting rights belonging to forest company MaMook Natural Resources.

The shift follows an agreement between the Ahousaht, Hesquiaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations along with the British Columbia government and MaMook, with financial support from the charity Nature United.

"It took beyond a decade to bring all four of those parties into mutual understanding for a pathway that could lead to results that everybody [was] comfortable with," Atleo said, noting two other nearby First Nations were also involved in discussions.

"The forests company's interests are of course to manage its assets for company value and, in this case, the other negotiating parties were able to present a deal or an offer that was appealing to the company" and its shareholders, he said.

The newly created areas are to be managed with the governance systems, stewardship priorities and economic goals of the three First Nations.

"What we want to see is a more ecosystem-based forestry model and one where you aren't just clear-cut logging, of course, but you are still generating economic and social value from timber resources," Atleo said.

The area Ahousaht will manage includes cedar, spruce and hemlock trees, with some Douglas fir. It encompasses some old-growth and areas of cultural significance to the nation, but it has also seen "a lot of historical logging," he said.

Ahousaht is to work with experts and advisers on a comprehensive strategy that centres on biodiversity, carbon storage and local opportunities, Atleo said.

"We're not talking about huge volume forestry here. We're talking about smaller scale, with high-quality results." Atleo said activities beyond harvesting could include restoration work, addressing what he describes as significant destruction of salmon habitat and slope destabilization from previous logging, along with potential for ecotourism.

Hesquiaht Chief Mariah Charleston said her nation must still consult community members on next steps for the new tree farm licence. "But when it comes down to it, it will be our people that make the decision together."

It's been exciting to see the opening of a road into the area that has been closed for some time, she said.

"It links our community members to harvesting our medicines ... and connecting with portions of the territory that they haven't been able to connect with in the last number of years."

Charleston said huge portions of Hesquiaht territory have been affected by logging and that restoring access to the area would allow the nation to begin restoration work and, with it, create jobs for community members.

Work to be done

The new tree farm licences build on a 2024 agreement that saw the Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations work with the province to protect about 76,000 hectares in the region, including old-growth forests at the centre of the so-called "War in the Woods" protests in the early 1990s.

Michael Reid, B.C. program director for Nature United, said he couldn't share the dollar figure in the latest agreement. But his organization has contributed more than \$40 million in recent years to support the First Nations' visions, he said.

"The province has not been absent from the conservation financing side of this work," he said. "But certainly the need far outweighs what's currently available."

Reid said he hopes the agreement can serve as a model for the provincial government, First Nations and forestry companies across B.C.

While the transfer of control of the Clayoquot Sound forests is a major milestone, Atleo said the celebration is "brief," as there's much work yet to be done.

"The historical logging practices have decimated riparian habitat and we've been left with a bit of a mess," he said, adding partnerships with Nature United and the province have allowed the nation to undertake some of the cleanup.

"But there's decades and decades and hundreds of millions of dollars of work still to be done to correct those liabilities that have been left behind by bad forest practices," Atleo said.

"We have to go right to work."

QUOTES

"A wise parent gives his children roots and wings."

"Women do not become exhausted, they only exhaust others."

"Democracy is not about electing the best person. It's about not electing the worse person."

"We are always more afraid than we wish to be, but we can always be braver than we expect."

Covid 2020 – "All our dogs think we quit work to spend more time with them. All our cats think we were fired for being the losers they always thought we were."

First Nations say Eby backs down again and now seeks joint path on BC Indigenous law

By Alessia Passafiume & Wolfgang Depner News Politics April 20th 2026

British Columbia Premier David Eby has backed down again on the pausing of key parts of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, scrapping plans to table a suspension bill this legislative session.

The premier's office says in a brief statement that it "can confirm that the government will not be introducing legislation on DRIPA during this session."

Instead, it says Eby will hold a press conference Monday to outline next steps.

A draft document provided by a First Nations source says the government now hopes to work with First Nations to come up with a joint approach to DRIPA, under a framework for negotiations.

Eby met with First Nations leaders late Sunday afternoon, one of whom says the suspension law was withdrawn as a result of planned protests.

The premier has said a recent court decision on BC's mineral claims regime that cited DRIPA put the province at serious litigation risk, while First Nations have said the law should not be changed.

The draft government document says the goal now is to "arrive at a set of recommendations, supported by First Nations in BC and the Province of BC" on how to implement DRIPA.

The document provided to The Canadian Press says there is "no commitment to either a) make amendments, or b) not make amendments to DRIPA."

It is labelled as being subject to an NDA, or non-disclosure agreement.

The document outlines how discussions between the government, First Nations and other stakeholders could take place, and says there will be a "focus on reaching a shared understanding of how legislative alignment (with DRIPA) could most effectively work, in a manner led by First Nations and government but supported by the courts."

It says the first meetings could take place within two weeks of the process being announced.

The now-scrapped plan to table the suspension bill on Monday lasted just a few hours after it emerged Sunday, and was immediately repudiated by First Nations leaders who have also opposed previous plans to amend DRIPA instead.

Attorney General Niki Sharma and Indigenous Relations Minister Spencer Chandra Herbert were also at the meeting with First Nations leaders late Sunday to discuss the latest moves on DRIPA, according to information provided by a source attending the online gathering.

A First Nations leadership source in the meeting said the government was "withdrawing the proposed (suspension) legislation because we have agreed to work together to address each others concerns."

The source said the First Nations leaders and the government agreed "to develop a joint statement on the basic agreement to work together between now and next legislative session."

The current session ends on May 28, with sittings resuming in September.

"It's not agreed on, but it will be the starting point I suspect," a First Nations source said of the draft document. "It's workable."

Sunday's developments represent the latest climbdown for Eby on DRIPA, which was intended to reflect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

But the December court ruling on mining regulations had prompted concerns about the potential sweeping impact of DRIPA on BC's laws, with the court saying DRIPA should be interpreted to give "immediate legal effect" to UNDRIP.

That prompted Eby to pledge amendments to DRIPA, saying these were "non-negotiable" — a stance that infuriated First Nations leaders, resulting in the amendments proposal being dropped.

Then came a plan to suspend key parts of DRIPA for three years, which Eby said would give the Supreme Court of Canada time to rule on the government's appeal in the mining case. He said he would make the vote on the suspension a confidence vote, meaning his government with its one-vote majority would fall if it failed.

But that plan, too, was roundly condemned by First Nations, with Grand Chief Stewart Phillip saying his NDP MLA wife, Joan Phillip, did not support it.

The idea of a confidence vote was then also scrapped.

The next plan, to table the suspension bill in a non-confidence vote on Monday, had prompted the First Nations Leadership Council to tell legislators to reject it, before the proposal was also swiftly dropped Sunday afternoon.

This report by The Canadian Press was first published April 19, 2026.

Squamish Nation will defend rights, title if territory impacted by federal agreement: council

Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) council has vowed to defend its rights and title following an agreement between the x̓m̓əθk̓w̓əy̓əm (Musqueam) Indian Band and the Government of Canada that the Squamish Nation fears could infringe on its territory.

Last month, the federal government announced it signed three agreements with the Musqueam Indian Band regarding the first nation's rights and roles in fisheries, stewardship and marine emergency management. The federal government said in the Feb. 20 release that the agreements represent a major step towards reconciliation.

However, a recent statement by the Squamish Nation's chairperson and council said they're deeply concerned by public materials, including maps, that appear to show areas within the Nation's traditional territory.

"Let us be clear: The Squamish Nation government will defend and uphold our inherent Aboriginal rights and title. Any implication that another Nation's agreement could extend into Squamish territory will be challenged," the March 6 statement read.

Council also said the Squamish Nation was not consulted or meaningfully engaged by the federal government before the announcement. The council has requested an "urgent" meeting with federal officials with full transparency on the agreements, including the intent, scope and any implications for Squamish territory and interests, the statement said.

In the statement, they said a comprehensive legal review of the agreements and its impacts is now underway.

"While the federal government has stated that this agreement does not affect the rights of other First Nations, we are independently verifying that claim and will take all necessary steps to protect Squamish Nation's rights and title," the statement said.

"Finally, it remains our hope that we will continue to maintain a positive relationship with our relatives at the Musqueam Indian Band," the statement continues. "However, Squamish Nation will challenge any process or agreement that undermines or disregards our rights, title, or jurisdiction."

What are the agreements?

The Musqueam Indian Band and federal government signed the šx̓q̓w̓alt̓əlt̓ən A Rights Recognition Agreement, x̓m̓əθk̓w̓əy̓əm Stewardship & Marine Management Agreement and the x̓m̓əθk̓w̓əy̓əm Fisheries Agreement.

According to a federal press release, the rights recognition agreement establishes a framework for incremental implementation of rights and relations with Canada.

The other two agreements allow the Musqueam and federal government to share decision making in marine management and fisheries.

The recent agreements are topical after a B.C. Supreme Court ruling last year confirmed Aboriginal title on about 800 acres in south Richmond, raising concerns on what happens to private property on Aboriginal title land.

Earlier this month, the Musqueam nation said in a statement that the agreements don't relate to land ownership and there are no impacts to fee simple lands or private property.

"Musqueam is not coming for anyone's private property. Our approach to traditional unceded territory is one of partnership and relationship with our neighbours, not trying to take away our neighbours' private property," said Musqueam Chief Wayne Sparrow in the statement.

Dwight Newman, a law professor at the University of Saskatchewan, said the agreement doesn't involve property or land transfers. "That couldn't be done via this agreement," said Newman.

He said there might be federal recognition of Musqueam title to privately owned lands down the road, but that doesn't mean people are losing private land.

"It would mean that the federal government is negotiating on that basis, and that the federal government might have to consult with the Musqueam on things that arise from uses of private lands," he said.

Newman said until the province produces a similar agreement, there are fewer direct effects on private lands.

Potential issues with neighbouring First Nations, experts say

Newman said there could be legal issues with other First Nations.

"We might see a legal challenge to these agreements, if the Squamish put an argument that it has infringed upon Squamish rights or simply developed in a way that violated their right to be consulted," he said.

Darwin Hanna, a UBC adjunct law professor and a lawyer who focuses on treaty negotiations and specific claims, said the current agreement doesn't impact neighbouring first nations' interests. However, future resulting agreements might.

"Those nations do have concerns and those are real concerns," said Hanna. "They'll have the process over time to address the overlapping interests. Just because the Government of Canada recognizes the title of Musqueam, it does not preclude the recognition of other nations to their rights and title to the same area."

Overall, Hanna said the agreements can be a win-win for both the public and First Nations.

"It provides a means for nations to finally have their rights and title recognized through negotiated agreements, and it provides for real opportunities for nations to be more involved as they should be within their territory," he said.

Abby Luciano is the Indigenous and civic affairs reporter for the North Shore News. This reporting beat is made possible by the Local Journalism Initiative.

'We've had enough secrets': First Nations group opposes Ontario move to limit freedom-of-information laws

CBC NEWS

Wed, March 18, 2026

First Nations are voicing opposition to Ontario's proposed legislation to change freedom-of-information (FOI) laws, saying they're concerned it would reduce Indigenous communities' ability to access information.

If the law change passes in the Legislature, the records of the premier, cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and their offices would no longer be subject to FOI laws, meaning members of the public wouldn't be able to access them through FOI requests.

On Monday, the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI), which represents some 20,000 First Nations citizens across Ontario, issued a statement condemning the move.

Provincial decisions affect First Nations' rights, lands and environments, and FOI requests are "one of the few mechanisms available to First Nations and the public to understand how those decisions were made," it said.

"Having access to this information, particularly if it's a decision made by the premier or other cabinet ministers, or just understanding how those decisions came to be, is just part of good governance," said Stacia Loft, the AIAI's deputy grand chief and a member of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte.

"If First Nations don't see that good governance is happening, that just exacerbates that issue of trust."

Economic projects underway across Ontario — including in the mineral-rich Ring of Fire area in the north, and a future high-speed rail project between Toronto and Ottawa — have the potential to impact First Nation communities, Loft said, also pointing to the Green Belt scandal.

The details of any decision that connects or intersects with Indigenous rights or treaty rights need to be available and accessible, she said.

Why Ford's defending the FOI move

On Tuesday, Premier Doug Ford defended the proposed changes, calling the current legislation "antiquated" and saying the Ontario government is bringing its FOI laws in line with laws in other provinces and the federal government.

He stressed he wants personal information like calls and messages from constituents to be kept confidential.

But Jessica Orkin, a Toronto-based lawyer who works in Aboriginal and access-to-information law, said there are already exemptions in place for personal information not related to government business.

"Really, what we see here is an attempt to not have to answer the other requests that are not already covered by those exemptions," she said.

"I think we know that what is not going to be disclosed now are the things that politicians, and ministers in particular, most want to hide."

There is a "relationship deficit" between many Indigenous people and the government, which can be a barrier to understanding decisions made by the government, Orkin said. For her clients, FOI requests help provide understanding, she said.

"This can be really important for ensuring that consultation obligations are met and ensuring that the government actually has made its decisions for the reasons that it's telling you, as opposed to other reasons that it holds behind the scenes."

Group urges premier to reconsider law change

For Loft, minimizing access to information raises questions about whether or not the government is upholding its responsibility to free, prior and informed consent of First Nations.

It doesn't help "whatsoever" in alleviating the distrust many Indigenous people feel toward the government, she said, especially as the province is moving at "a relatively fast pace with a number of projects and with a number of decisions that will certainly impact First Nations rights."

In its statement, the AIAI urged the province to reconsider its proposed FOI change, but if it does move forward, Loft believes the government will face court battles.

"As soon as an Indigenous right is impacted, then yes, it will be challenged," Loft said.

"Access is the rule and secrecy is the exception. And we've had enough secrets."

AUBUT: The province without treaties — how BC broke Canada's land compact

From www.westernstandard.news Published on: 18 Mar 2026

A century of delay, judge-made law, and political avoidance have left BC at the breaking point of Canada's promise of legal and territorial certainty.

British Columbia sits at the sharpest edge of Canada's unfinished land question. Much of the rest of the country moved, however imperfectly, through treaties that exchanged claims of title for reserves, annuities, harvesting rights, and later modern agreements. BC largely did not. Its historic treaties were limited mainly to the 14 Douglas Treaties on parts of Vancouver Island and Treaty 8 in the northeast. The result was a province with reserve lands but, in most places, without the wider territorial settlement that treaties elsewhere were meant to provide. Delay, uncertainty, and litigation followed, where a more orderly settlement might have been possible.

The lack of treaties in BC was not simply an accident. Treaty-making did not continue after 1854, and the colonial government under Joseph Trutch moved away from James Douglas's earlier approach. Historical summaries from federal and provincial sources acknowledge that BC was unwilling to recognize First Nations land rights in the broader way adopted elsewhere, while Trutch reduced reserve lands and denied Aboriginal Title. The consequence was that BC continued to create reserves while avoiding the larger question of territorial settlement.

It also explains why reserves in BC cannot be taken as proof that the title was resolved. For most of the province, reserves were not created by treaty. The Indian Act defines a reserve as land vested in the Crown and set apart for the use and benefit of a band. In BC, the constitutional basis after Confederation was Article 13 of the Terms of Union, and the Supreme Court has described reserve creation there as a federal-provincial process requiring Crown intention and practical steps. Reserve creation and treaty settlement were separate matters. BC pursued the former while postponing the latter.

I am a geologist, not a lawyer, and I do not live in British Columbia. That does not place these questions beyond my reach. It means I have had to approach them the way I approach any difficult subject: by asking questions, following the evidence, and trying to understand how the present situation came to be. One question in particular has stayed with me for years. Why does British Columbia, unlike so much of the rest of Canada, have so few treaties and so little to show for more than a century of delay in resolving that fact?

Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 changed the legal terrain by recognizing and affirming existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, but it did not define them in operational terms. Much of the working law was then developed by the courts. Canadian common law allows judges to develop doctrine through precedent, and that is what occurred with fiduciary duty, honour of the Crown, and the duty to consult. Those phrases do not appear in section 35 itself. The Supreme Court developed them through cases such as *Guerin*, *Sparrow*, *Haida*, and *Mikisew*. In legal method, that is, common-law development. In political terms, it means that much of the machinery now governing land, consultation, and reconciliation was judicially constructed rather than clearly enacted by legislators.

The present conflict in BC is where that unfinished history meets modern judge-made doctrine. In August 2025, the BC Supreme Court in *Cowichan Tribes v. Canada* recognized Aboriginal Title over about 732 acres in southeast Richmond. Richmond described the ruling as placing Aboriginal Title ahead of fee simple ownership, and legal summaries note that the court rejected the argument that Crown grants of fee simple had permanently displaced Aboriginal Title. Instead, the court treated Aboriginal Title and fee simple as capable of coexisting, though not without tension, and left reconciliation to be worked out where they conflict.

That matters because fee simple has long been treated as the strongest ordinary private estate in land. BC's Property Law Act says land remains an estate in fee simple in the owner, and the Land Title Act says an indefeasible title is conclusive evidence that the registered owner is entitled to an estate in fee simple, subject to listed exceptions. Fee simple is not imaginary, but neither is it absolute. It exists under statute, under the Crown grant, and under the possibility of expropriation or overriding constitutional limits. The *Cowichan* ruling tests whether an ordinary registered title can remain untouched when an Aboriginal Title claim succeeds over the same land.

BC's long failure to settle title has therefore become a conflict among multiple rights-holders, not simply between indigenous claimants and the Crown. Richmond appealed. Tsawwassen First Nation also appealed, arguing that the ruling affected land and fishing areas within its own treaty and traditional territory. Then, on February 20, 2026, Canada and Musqueam signed agreements intended to recognize Musqueam's rights and title within Musqueam territory and deepen Musqueam's role in fisheries and stewardship. Within days, Squamish and Tsawwassen objected that the materials appeared to overlap with their own territories or treaty lands. Once the title is recognized incrementally, bilaterally, and without comprehensive settlement of overlaps, an advance for one group is easily seen as a threat by another.

Government delay has compounded this problem. Canada and BC have long acknowledged that treaties are the main instrument for achieving certainty, yet BC has reached very few of them relative to the scale of unresolved claims. Canada's comprehensive claims policy since 1973 has aimed at certainty in ownership, use, and management of lands and resources. The made-in-BC treaty process began in 1992 for the same reason. Governments have known for decades what the problem was.

This is also the setting in which equal citizenship becomes harder to describe in simple terms. Canada now operates with differentiated legal regimes. Reserve lands are held by the Crown for the use and benefit of bands rather than in ordinary fee simple by individual residents. Aboriginal and treaty rights are constitutionally protected in ways that ordinary property rights are not. Some modern treaty nations have moved beyond parts of the reserve framework into treaty settlement lands and self-government structures, while others remain under the Indian Act. Those differences are real and substantial, and they are increasingly difficult to reconcile with a single understanding of citizenship, property, and jurisdiction.

That tension has been sharpened further in British Columbia by the province's adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act in 2019. The Legislature did not literally transfer law-making authority to the United Nations, but it did require the provincial government to take measures to align BC laws with the UN Declaration, and it authorized agreements involving joint statutory decision-making and, in some cases, indigenous consent before certain statutory powers are exercised. BC has therefore chosen to use an international declaration as a framework for provincial law and policy. That raises a serious question about democratic accountability and about how much authority a province should anchor in standards developed outside Canada's own legislative process.

The harder question is what fairness now requires. It cannot mean pretending the problem does not exist. It also cannot mean allowing governments or courts to proceed with one bilateral arrangement at a time while neighbouring First Nations, third-party owners, and municipalities are left to guess at the legal effect. A fair path forward would require an honest recognition that BC left title broadly unsettled, a comprehensive process for dealing with overlapping claims before recognition instruments are signed, statutory rules for the treatment of good-faith fee simple owners who acquired land under the ordinary land-title system, and movement away from indefinite reserve dependency toward clearer local accountability, whether through modern treaties, self-government arrangements, or other legislated structures that define ownership, jurisdiction, taxation, and services in plain terms. The objective should be certainty.

Has Canada backed itself into a corner? To a degree, yes. Section 35 cannot be altered by ordinary legislation, and Parliament cannot broadly amend the Constitution on its own. At the same time, the courts have built doctrines around section 35 that governments now treat as operational law. There is therefore no simple legislative exit. That does not make a solution impossible, but it does mean the solution must be political, legislative, and negotiated. Comprehensive settlements, legislation clarifying the effect of title recognition on third-party interests, and a willingness to confront overlapping claims before they become crises would all be part of any serious response.

The sovereignty issue should also be stated accurately. King Charles III is not Canada's head of state as the sovereign of Great Britain. He is the King of Canada. Canada's difficulty is not foreign rule. It is domestic constitutional coherence. A country can live with unresolved tensions for a long time, but not indefinitely if land ownership, jurisdiction, consultation, title, and competing indigenous claims remain unsettled in major regions.

That is the central point. BC's refusal to settle the title did not remove the issue. It deferred it. The courts later gave legal force to unresolved claims, but without creating a comprehensive settlement mechanism. The conflict is no longer abstract. It affects fee simple owners, municipalities, ports, resource projects, treaty nations, non-treaty nations, and overlapping claimants. A just path forward is still possible, but only if Canada stops treating reserve creation as though it settled title, stops relying on courts to finish what governments declined to do, and treats certainty in land and jurisdiction as a national necessity rather than an indefinitely postponed task.

B.C. gives First Nations on Vancouver Island funding for clean-energy projects

by Laura Brougham March 16, 2026 From CHEK NEWS

Vancouver Island First Nations will be getting a combined total of \$130,000 for clean-energy projects.

The B.C. government announced \$6.6 million in funding for 13 First Nations across the province.

On Vancouver Island, Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tles7et'h' First Nations are receiving \$40,000 to conduct a feasibility study of renewable-energy generation technologies, and the Hesquiaht First Nation is receiving \$90,000 for a new community energy plan for Refuge Cove.

"In these uncertain times, it's more important than ever to diversify our energy sources and transition toward a low-carbon economy," said Adrian Dix, minister of energy and climate solutions.

"First Nations are leading this change by advancing clean-energy projects in remote communities that will reduce their dependence on diesel fuel and help them attain energy sovereignty."

This funding is coming from the province's Community Energy Diesel Reduction (CEDR) Program to reduce the community's reliance on diesel fuel.

The province says there are 44 communities that are not connected to the provincial electricity grid, most of those communities are governed by First Nations.

Of the 13 communities receiving funding in this most recent round, Tsay Keh Dene Nation is receiving the most, with \$1.5 million to design a 3.5-megawatt solar photovoltaic project.

30 women and girls ‘violently’ killed in Canada so far in 2026: femicide observatory

By Robin Della Corte Updated: March 15, 2026 CTV NEWS

Warning: Graphic content.

Thirty women and girls have been “violently” killed in Canada in 2026 so far, according to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability.

The early 2026 data was provided to CTVNews.ca earlier this month following the release of the observatory’s latest report on femicide in 2025.

Last year, 147 women and girls were reported to have been killed in Canada, according to a two-page report published by the observatory. The accused in most of these cases are male, the observatory says.

This marks the first decrease in femicide in Canada since 2019, according to the report.

The number of women and girls killed had been on the rise since 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the observatory says its data showed.

However, the observatory says the current numbers for 2026 suggest an ongoing need for awareness, prevention and action to address femicide in Canada.

“Even one (death) is a problem if it could have been prevented,” Myrna Dawson, founder and director of the observatory, told CTVNews.ca in an interview.

“Since we started collecting data in 2018, it’s 1,500 women. That is the tip of the iceberg. This is the number of women that get killed as a result of male violence against women.”

Number of women and girls violently killed in Canada by year

Femicide is the intentional killing of a woman or girl because of bias against this group of people or misogyny, Dawson said, a professor of sociology at the University of Guelph who has spent three decades studying femicide, violence against women and girls, violence prevention, criminal justice and public policy.

While an accused can be a family member, friend, acquaintance or a stranger, femicide is most often committed by a current or former intimate partner of the victim, according to Dawson.

Of the 147 women and girls killed in 2025, the accused in 34 per cent of cases was a current or former intimate partner, according to the observatory data. Dawson said the rate of femicides that involve a current or former intimate partner as the accused is 55 per cent on average, upon completion of police investigations.

Around 72 per cent of the women and girls were killed in a private location, such as their own home or the home of the accused, the report on 2025 deaths said. Eighteen per cent of the males accused of intimate partner femicide were reported to have died by suicide.

Pressure on shelters

A femicide is often preceded by intimate partner violence and domestic violence, particularly when a woman decides to leave or has already left the relationship, according to Anuradha Dugal, executive director of Women's Shelters Canada.

She says the rate at which women are accessing shelters in Canada is rising, with the severity of harms intensifying.

"The types of harm that a survivor has experienced seem to be multiplying," Dugal told CTVNews.ca in an interview. "It is more complex, multi-faceted — physical, psychological, financial and sexual."

As a result, the demand on front-line workers at the shelters has grown, Dugal added, saying that awareness and prevention require continuous effort from all sectors.

"Prevention has to happen in of all places, all the time — schools, workplaces, sports teams, university — all kinds of settings," Dugal said.

"There's a lot of education in the younger generation around things like consent, but femicide happens equally. The data from the observatory shows that it's pretty evenly split between all three generations."

Bill C-16

In December 2025, the federal government renewed its commitment to ending gender-based violence when it allocated \$223.4 million over five years starting in 2026–27, with \$44.7 million ongoing to strengthen federal action in response.

Bill C-16 was introduced the same month, aiming to strengthen protections for victims and introducing the term "femicide" into the Criminal Code of Canada. The bill seeks to classify these killings as first-degree murder in the Code.

The observatory was one of several organizations that had been advocating for the term "femicide" to be included in the Criminal Code for almost a decade.

"A femicide means that women are killed in distinct ways but there's often similar precursors," Dawson said.

"The killing of women and girls is distinct from the killing of men and boys, and we need to recognize that distinction in order to have more nuanced prevention."

Dawson says having the term femicide legally recognized is the first step in ensuring proper awareness, prevention and action.

"There's been a lot of work done in other countries that now recognize femicides and have laid out processes and procedures for investigating the killings of women and girls when they occur, to determine if it is femicide," Dawson said.

“That’s important in terms of prevention, because then there’s more of a gendered lens on these killings of something that’s more specific to women, meaning that we need to understand them better if we’re going to put prevention initiatives in place to prevent them better than we do now and again.”

Several provinces in Canada, including Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Manitoba and Nova Scotia, have Domestic Violence Death Review Committees (DVDRCs) that analyze domestic violence-related deaths and make prevention recommendations.

Alberta’s committee, which was established in 2013, was dissolved at the end of last year.

These committees consist of experts from all different sectors, which Dawson says is necessary to ensure a multidisciplinary approach.

The challenge is ensuring recommendations get implemented, Dawson said.

“We need more action on the recommendations that are made. These committees spend a lot of time investigating and reviewing the deaths that have happened to see where the systems have not worked (...) We need to understand if the recommendations are being made,” she said.

“If femicide passes into law, that’s great, but then it’s about the implementation.”

Above all, the most pressing challenge is changing societal attitudes towards women, a shift that could contribute to reducing violence against women, Dawson says.

“There’s concerns about the next generation with the rise of the manosphere and, the radicalization of some young men and their attitudes towards young women and healthy relationships,” she said.

“If we think about the next generation of males that are now growing up, if knowledge about this issue becomes more entrenched in society and helps to go against the attitudes, then that helps with the next generation.”

Methodology

The observatory said its data is obtained from media and police reports - sometimes followed through the criminal justice system if cases proceed - and then cross-checked with Statistics Canada when the official figures are released.

Numbers increase over time as investigations conclude, suspicious deaths are confirmed as homicide, or new deaths are recorded, according to the observatory.

If you or someone you know is struggling with sexual assault or trauma, the following resources are available to support people in crisis:

Indian Residential School Survivors Society crisis lines: +1 866 925 4419 or +1 800 721 0066 (24/7)

Call 911 if you are in immediate danger or fear for your safety.
Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 988 (24/7)

Nisga'a Nation members allege 'heightened financial risk' of B.C. LNG projects

By The Canadian Press

Published: March 19, 2026

VANCOUVER — Two members of the Nisga'a Nation have filed a lawsuit in B.C. Supreme Court alleging the First Nation failed to adequately consult its citizens before partnering with Western LNG on the development of the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission Project.

Cecil Mercer and Stephen Nyce say in their lawsuit that the pipeline project is interconnected with the Ksi Lisims floating natural-gas facility and marine export terminal near Prince Rupert, B.C., which has been dubbed a nation-building project by the federal Liberal government.

The lawsuit says the projects “rely on the export of LNG,” at a time of declining demand in target markets, and it argues infrastructure built to facilitate LNG exports could become obsolete as countries transition to low-carbon energy.

The lawsuit says the pipeline’s cost was first estimated to be \$5 billion in 2014, but has since ballooned to between \$10 billion and \$12 billion.

Mercer and Nyce’s lawsuit, which contains allegations not tested in court, says the ownership structure of the pipeline creates financial risk for the Nisga’a Nation, and they claim the Nisga’a Lisims Government was not financially prudent when partnering with Western LNG.

The lawsuit also names TC Energy Corp., Western LNG and the B.C. government as defendants, none of which have filed responses in court to the lawsuit filed in Vancouver last week.

The Lax Kw’alaams Band and the Metlakatla First Nation last year went to Federal Court seeking judicial review of the LNG project, alleging the federal environment minister ignored their concerns about adverse effects.

British Columbia’s Energy Minister Adrian Dix said in January that a deal between BC Hydro and the Nisga’a Nation will help power the export terminal, with the North Coast transmission line set to supply up to 600 megawatts to the Ksi Lisims LNG facility.

Prime Minister Mark Carney last November added the transmission line and the LNG facility to his government’s list of “nation-building projects,” calling them crucial to Canada’s clean-energy future and a potential source of thousands of jobs and billions in investment.

This report by Darryl Greer of The Canadian Press was first published March 19, 2026.

United Nations Human Rights Committee Urges Canada to End the Second Generation Cut-Off and Eliminate Discrimination Against Indigenous Women

UBCIC News Release March 24, 2026

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – March 24, 2026) - Yesterday, the United Nations Human Rights Committee recommended that Canada “eliminate the remaining discriminatory effects of the Indian Act on indigenous women and their descendants” by “adopting proposed amendments [in Bill S-2] concerning the second-generation cut-off rule.”

The Committee issued its Concluding Observations following the review of Canada’s seventh periodic report on compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The review took place in Geneva on March 3-4, 2026. Canada ratified the Covenant in 1976.

The Senate of Canada recently amended Bill S-2, An act to amend the Indian Act. These amendments, if adopted by the House of Commons in the coming weeks, would have the effect of removing the second generation cut-off from the Indian Act, and ending Canada’s policy of forced assimilation. However, the Government of Canada is stalling and has indicated its opposition to these amendments. The Indian Act Sex Discrimination Working Group (the Working Group)¹ which includes the leading plaintiffs in the court and UN petitions that have challenged Indian Act sex discrimination, along with First Nations organizations and advocates, informed the United Nations Human Rights Committee of Canada’s continued reluctance to end this discrimination. In its Concluding Observations, the Committee urged Canada to end this discrimination by adopting the amended Bill S-2.

The Working Group urges the Government of Canada to heed the calls of the UN Human Rights Committee to support the Senate’s amendments to the Bill S-2 and remove the second generation cut-off without delay.

The Committee’s recommendation follows the 2024 recommendations from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to end sex discrimination in the Indian Act and remove the second generation cut-off immediately. The Human Rights Committee also issued a decision in 2019 on the McIvor petition, in which the Committee found that the Indian Act discriminates against women and their descendants, and recommended restoration of entitlements to all those affected.

Sharon McIvor, a member of the Lower Nicola Band, and the plaintiff in McIvor v. Canada, said, “It is crystal clear that, in order to fulfill the rights of Indigenous women, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Canada must immediately end the sex discrimination in the Indian Act, remove the second generation cut-off and ensure equal enjoyment of rights and entitlements that are linked to status. Canada has a chance to do this in the coming weeks by supporting the Senate’s amendments to Bill S-2, which is currently in Parliament. I hope the Government of Canada will listen this time - to Indigenous women, to Indigenous communities, and to the United Nations experts.”

Zoë Craig-Sparrow, a member of the Musqueam Band and Vice-President of Justice for Girls, said: “I am deeply encouraged by having been listened to, and heard, by the world’s human rights experts. Although I come from a long line of Indigenous people and was born and raised on my territory, my children will not have status, and will not be entitled to any of its benefits. For me, and thousands like me, the Government of Canada needs to end the second generation cut-off now. This discrimination and assimilation has gone on long enough.”

Media inquiries:

23
Sharon McIvor & Zoë Craig-Sparrow, zoe@justiceforgirls.org

**BC ELDERS
COMMUNICATION
CENTER SOCIETY**

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1415 Weiwaikum Rd.
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V9W 5W9

Phone: 1-250-286-9977
Fax: 1-250-286-4809
Toll-Free: 1-877-738-7288
Coordinator:
Donna Stirling
Website: www.bcelders.com
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9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline offers support that is:

- bilingual
- trauma-informed
- culturally appropriate
- available to anyone in Canada

The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line

(1-800-721-0066)

**Is available 24 hours a day for anyone
experiencing pain or distress as a result of
their residential school experience.**

Provided by the Government of British Columbia: People struggling with opioid addiction can call 1-833-804-8111 toll-free for immediate assistance from a dedicated team, including doctors and nurses, who can prescribe life-saving opioid agonist medications.

ANNUAL BC ELDERS GATHERING INFO CORNER

THE 50th (2026) ANNUAL ELDERS GATHERING

DATES: AUGUST 25-26, 2026

August 24 is Mandatory Group Leader Check-in

PLACE: Vancouver Convention Centre, East Building