

Statement from Grand Chief Stewart Phillip on Human Rights Day

Written by Joan Russow

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(Unceded Coast Salish Territory / Vancouver, B.C. – December 10, 2017) December 10 is the day 70 years ago in 1948 when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights officially recognizing that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” In 2007 144 states voted in favour of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration). The Harper Government was one of four states to vote against the UN Declaration. The Trudeau Government formally endorsed the UN Declaration in 2010.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) issued the following statement to mark the United Nations' Human Rights Day:

“Indigenous Rights are human rights. On the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we call on federal, provincial and municipal governments to truly commit to the true spirit and intent of the UN Declaration as a fundamental international human rights instrument to advance human rights for Indigenous peoples as a framework for justice and reconciliation.

“Canada’s own legal and constitutional frameworks must adapt to the UN Declaration, especially Indigenous peoples’ free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) based on our inherent and inalienable rights pursuant to our Indigenous laws and authorities. FPIC is the right to say yes and the right to say no to development on our lands and territories in order to safeguard the land and waters for future generations.

“It is crucially important our inherent Title, Rights and Treaty Rights are recognized and affirmed in all processes Canada and BC engages in with Indigenous peoples. When our inherent Title, Rights and Treaty Rights are entirely disregarded or domestically diluted, governments are liable.

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“We gratefully acknowledge today is also the 5th Anniversary of the Idle No More movement and December 11 will be the 20th Anniversary of the historic Delgamuukw/Gisday’wa Supreme Court Decision. We raise our hands in appreciation to the leadership of the hereditary Chiefs and grassroots for their continuing fight for our human rights.

“In closing, we call on Premier Horgan to remember the members of Treaty 8 who are defending their land and way of life against BC Hydro’s destructive Site C project. In the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration, their Treaty 8 rights are human rights.”