

Anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: No Backsliding on Human Rights Commitments

It has been almost two decades since the international community adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a global human rights standard. As we mark the anniversary of the Declaration's adoption by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007, Indigenous Peoples' organizations and their supporters are urging all governments not to backslide on this critical human rights commitment.

The Government of Canada released its [fifth annual progress report](#) on Declaration implementation on August 28, 2026. It acknowledges that while some Action Plan measures have advanced, others continue to progress at a slower pace, citing ongoing barriers such as fragmented access to funding and insufficient oversight.

Indigenous Peoples have been raising concerns regarding backsliding or regression in implementation of the Declaration in Canada and globally. These concerns have been particularly prominent in British Columbia, where developments over the past year have raised serious questions about the durability of progress towards implementation.

British Columbia was the first province in Canada to specifically tackle Declaration implementation through legislation, with the BC [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act \(DRIPA\)](#) receiving unanimous support in the BC legislature when it was passed in 2019. However, implementation of the Declaration has become increasingly politicized in British Columbia, especially following recent court decisions such as *Gitxaala v. British Columbia (Chief Gold Commissioner)* and *Cowichan Tribes v. Canada (Attorney General)* upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In [April 2026](#), Premier David Eby proposed suspending key provisions related to DRIPA implementation. Following strong opposition from BC First Nations and Indigenous leadership, the Province ultimately withdrew the proposed changes.

As recently as August 2026, an application by BC Conservative MLA Harman Bhangu for an initiative petition seeking the [repeal of DRIPA was approved in principle by Elections BC](#). Beginning in October 2026, the petition will have 90 days to obtain signatures from 10 per cent of registered voters in each of BC's 93 electoral districts in order to proceed to the next stage of the initiative process.

These alarming developments demonstrate why implementation of the Declaration must be understood as an ongoing human rights obligation, not a political commitment that can be shelved or weakened when its implications become challenging. Progress towards implementation must be durable and robust, and governments must not regress from measures that they have already taken to recognize and uphold Indigenous Peoples' human rights.

On the eve of the Declaration's 20th anniversary, there are opportunities to celebrate its historic adoption by the UN General Assembly and the progress made towards its

implementation in Canada and internationally. However, this anniversary also marks a moment of accountability. The [Minister of Justice has reaffirmed Canada's commitment](#) to “moving forward together to advance UN Declaration Act implementation with a clear focus on achieving meaningful and lasting results for generations to come.” Meaningful and lasting progress requires results that are not only achieved, but sustained. As we approach twenty years since the adoption of the Declaration, this milestone must also be an opportunity to measure whether governments have translated their commitments into durable implementation of the inherent, Treaty, and human rights of Indigenous Peoples affirmed by the Declaration.

Statement from the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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