

Volume 26 Issue 1

FEBRUARY 2026

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Month For Your Elders, Chief & Council
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EV'S 295th Issue!

BC ELDERS COMMUNICATION CENTER SOCIETY



ELDERS VOICE

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!!

50TH (2026) Elders Gathering

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

**Also please check out the Grand Entry Slide Show
from the 2025 Elders Gathering**

Inside this issue

List of Paid Support
Fees

2

Dynamic Specialty
Vehicles

3

UBCIC: JOINT STATE-
MENT

4-5

Ottawa, First Nations:
Child Welfare System

6

BC's David Eby

7-9

Vancouver Student:
Putting Down the Cell

9-11

Pg. 12: 'Nəmgis First Nation Notice

Pgs. 13-14: Vatican Returning
Artifacts, but not a gift.

Pgs. 15-16: FN Seeks Aboriginal Title

Pgs. 17-18: Eby Says B.C. May Revise
DRIPA Legislation

Pg.19: stałəwasəm Bridge

Pgs. 20-21: Wind Project Set For
Northwest of Campbell River

Pgs. 21-22: Rare Occurrence of a Polar
Bear Adopting a Cub

Pg. 23: Ironies of the Penal System

Back Pg:

Annual Elders Gathering Info
CRISIS HELP LINE INFORMATION

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

Hummingbird Level—\$250

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

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Thank you!



Dynamic Specialty Vehicles would like to thank Donna Stirling, her staff and the volunteers involved in arranging another fantastic Elders Gathering.

We would also like to thank everyone that took the time to stop and chat with us at our information booth and participated in the raffle.

Congratulations to the winners:

- Ronny West of Lake Babine Nation
- Harvey Dick of Tleitingot'in Nation

Please feel free to contact us.

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THE RIGHT PEOPLE. THE RIGHT BUS.



Union of BC Indian Chiefs: Joint Statement: B.C.'s Declaration Act Provides a Backstop of Certainty in a World of Chaos

Calls to amend the Declaration Act or appeal recent court decisions would undermine economic certainty, reconciliation, and shared prosperity in British Columbia.

December 22, 2025 - The holiday season is a time to slow down, take stock, and reflect on the year behind us and the path ahead.

At a time of global instability and uncertainty, people are understandably looking for clarity, certainty, and leadership grounded in shared values. Difficult moments can bring out the best in us—or they can provoke fear-based reactions that risk undoing hard-won progress. Recent trends in British Columbia are cause for concern.

Despite recent court decisions that reaffirm the crucial need to consult and negotiate, a negative narrative has begun to take hold. This narrative wrongly blames First Nations for uncertainty while ignoring the historical reality that British Columbia was largely settled without treaties. It replaces facts and experience with fear, and cooperation with division.

If allowed to shape public discourse or government decision-making, this narrative risks pulling our province backward—toward a time marked by blame, conflict, increased litigation, and even real threats of violence against Indigenous peoples. That is not a future any of us should accept.

Recent calls to amend the Declaration Act or appeal court rulings are rooted in this fear-based response. They suggest that the framework we have built together is the problem, when in fact it has been part of the solution. These actions would not create certainty—they would slow progress, increase litigation, and grind projects to a halt as First Nations are once again forced to defend our rights and interests through the courts.

British Columbia is facing real economic challenges, and First Nations are essential partners in addressing them. Our Nations are drivers of the provincial economy, supporting local communities and helping to close economic gaps through responsible projects and developments in our territories. These projects depend on the certainty provided by the Declaration Act, which offers a clear, principled pathway for First Nations, governments, and industry to work together—advancing reconciliation while enabling timely and sustainable development.

The Declaration Act was developed collaboratively with Indigenous peoples and passed unanimously by all parties in the Legislature, with the support of industry, business, and labour. It establishes minimum standards of survival and dignity for Indigenous peoples and has contributed to greater trust, stability, and economic certainty across the province. It is landmark legislation—and one British Columbia should be proud of.

As we look toward 2026, British Columbia faces a clear choice about the path we walk together: a path of negotiation, collaboration, and shared prosperity with First Nations and all British Columbians, or a path that takes us backward to a place of uncertainty and conflict that none of us want to revisit.

The Declaration Act—and decisions like *Gitxaala v. British Columbia (Chief Gold Commissioner)*—are not obstacles. They are opportunities. They provide a framework to do the necessary work of reconciliation in a way that builds clarity, stability, and shared success.

This holiday season, we call on leaders and British Columbians alike to pause, reflect, and recognize the steady progress that has been made under the Declaration Act—and the healthier, more respectful relationships that have emerged because of it.

We call on Premier Eby to uphold the Declaration Act, resist calls to amend it or pursue appeals, and to sit down with Indigenous leadership to continue the work of building certainty, trust, and economic prosperity for everyone in British Columbia.

Endorsed by:

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B.C. Assembly of First Nations

SC'IAᑭᑭᑭ First Nation

Ch'iyāqtel (Tzeachten First Nation)

shíshálh Nation

Cowichan Tribes

Shxw'ōwhámèl First Nation

Esk'etemc

Skeetchestn Indian Band

First Nations Summit

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Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs

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High Bar First Nation

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Lyackson First Nation

Ts'kw'aylaxw

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McLeod Lake Indian Band

Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs

Nak'azdli Whuten

West Moberly First Nations

Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council

Yakweakwioose First Nation

Ottawa, First Nations presenting plans to reform child welfare system

By The Canadian Press

Published: December 22, 2025

OTTAWA — Ottawa and First Nations are presenting the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal with competing plans to reform the First Nations child welfare system today — the latest step in a lengthy fight that has stretched nearly 20 years.

The August tribunal order that mandated the proposals came nine years after it concluded that the federal government had discriminated against First Nations children by underfunding the on-reserve child welfare system.

That followed a joint 2007 human rights complaint filed by the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society.

Progress on a child welfare agreement to reform the system stalled in 2024 when First Nations twice rejected a \$47.8-billion deal they said did not go far enough to protect kids.

Ottawa called a halt to formal talks on the issue with First Nations outside of Ontario.

Minister of Indigenous Services Mandy Gull-Masty says she spent much time analyzing why the last agreement didn't pass, adding that the government decided to take a national approach that's based on regional agreements.

Catherine Morrison, The Canadian Press

With files from Alessia Passafiume

From APTN.NEWS.CA

Ottawa offers new \$35.5-billion plan for child-welfare reform

By Fraser Needham

Dec 22, 2025

The Carney government submitted its multi-billion-dollar plan for long-term reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services program to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on Monday.

The government's plan commits \$35.5 billion to long-term reform to the end of 2034.

It also says it will provide an ongoing commitment of \$4.4 billion annually after that time period to ensure First Nations children and families have sustainable resources.

At an Assembly of First Nations meeting in October 2024, chiefs rejected a proposed \$47.8-billion agreement on long-term reform put forward by the Trudeau government, saying it had been reached without enough consultation with First Nations.

B.C.'s David Eby 'not seeking' 2026 election, after year that tested NDP coalition

By The Canadian Press from CTVNEWS.CA

Published: December 22, 2025

VICTORIA — It should have been a very bad day for David Eby's government.

But on Dec. 3, the morning after the pending closure of the pulp mill in Crofton, B.C., was announced with the loss of 350 jobs, the political focus was on the leadership saga in the Opposition B.C. Conservatives, as 20 of the party's MLAs called on then-leader John Rustad to quit.

It was emblematic of the chaos in the Conservative ranks over the past year, which Eby acknowledged has been politically beneficial to his NDP government.

But he rejected the suggestion that he got a hall pass in 2025, after eking out a one-seat majority in the October 2024 election.

"If that was a hall pass, then I guess I'll never ask to go to the bathroom again in school," Eby said in a year-end interview.

"It was a very eventful and very challenging set of sessions, and it is huge piece of work that we have to do as British Columbians in this very consequential moment for our province."

It has been a tough year for Eby, with strained NDP relations with First Nations, unions and environmentalists.

But on the Conservative side, Rustad saw his ranks in the legislature reduced from 44 to 39 as MLAs lost confidence in a leadership marked by defections, claims of blackmail and caucus-room mobile phone checks in an attempt to find those members leaking information.

Conservatives, in other words, were busy drawing attention to themselves, and away from other issues. Rustad has since resigned, with Trevor Halford installed as interim leader while jostling begins for a leadership race

"A lot of people assume that the Conservative chaos is helpful," Eby said.

"On one level, it certainly is politically. But I think ultimately, some of what we've seen come out of the Conservatives is quite corrosive in terms of the work we have to do in this province."

The Conservative chaos has raised the question of whether Eby would try to take advantage by calling an early election.

Eby said British Columbians would go into an election if the Opposition succeeded in blocking legislation. He pointed to his government's decision to declare the recent vote on the North Coast Transmission Line a confidence measure — it passed by one vote, with the help of Speaker Raj Chouhan.

"But we're not seeking an election here," Eby said, when pressed about the likelihood of a snap election in 2026. "I also want to say we're ready, if it's necessary. We're fundraising, we're debt-free, we're ready to go if we have to, but British Columbians don't want an election."

The big issues of the year — the U.S. trade war, a public service strike, and court rulings on Indigenous claims — have all tested the cohesion of his party's coalition.

Eby's government responded to U.S. protectionism with several pieces of legislation during the spring session, but their political price may turn out to be high.

Two bills intended to fast-track resource projects drew loud opposition from First Nations and environmentalists. Both bills also needed Chouhan's vote to pass.

First Nations have also been critical of Eby's suggestions that the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act many need to be amended after a court ruling found that government had failed to consult First Nations on B.C.'s mineral claims regime.

The ruling added to the tensions between government and First Nations in the wake of the Cowichan Tribes Aboriginal title ruling, which raised concerns about the implications for private land ownership in the title area in Richmond, B.C., and beyond.

"We have disagreements from time to time — there's no question," Eby said of his government's relationship with First Nations. "But the trajectory of the work is clear. We're working with First Nations across the province."

He said the government amended legislation all time and would continue to do so, "to make sure that we're respecting the bright lines that British Columbians have, that they stay in charge ... not the courts, that private property is protected."

Unions, meanwhile, called on the government to reverse a BC Ferries' decision to purchase four new vessels from a shipyard owned by China's Communist government. Then there was the largest public service strike in B.C. history, which lasted eight weeks until a deal with the British Columbia General Employees' Union was struck in late October.

The strike saw union leaders question the labour credentials of the NDP, while newly elected B.C. Greens Leader Emily Lowan demonstratively walked the picket line with workers.

Environmentalists both outside and within the NDP have been critical of the government touting new resource projects in northern B.C.

Then there is the state of B.C.'s finances. When Eby replaced the late John Horgan as premier in November 2022, forecasts showed B.C. with a surplus of almost \$6 billion.

Fast forward three years and there's a forecast deficit of \$11.2 billion.

Eby said there's a different reality compared with 2022, with resource prices down.

"So, in a province that is resource-dependent, we see these booms and these busts from time to time," he said. "The decision is: do we keep working to support British Columbians, or do we cut back?"

While B.C. could make cuts, "people are really struggling right now," Eby said. "So, our focus remains supporting British Columbians through this time."

Eby said government has reduced the public service by 1,100 positions, but the province needs more schools and hospitals.

“The bottom line is, we’re not going to cut our way out of this,” he added.

Eby acknowledged that not everybody in the party agrees with his government’s direction.

“I think that there are a lot of people within my NDP-movement world, who are activists, who have very strong positions on the environment, on involuntary care, on other big, challenging issues, Indigenous rights, and other pieces where they might disagree with the particular position government has taken on one of those issues,” he said.

But he also pointed to the NDP’s leadership review last month, which saw almost 83 per cent of delegates support him.

“The gratitude that I have, is that we came out of our convention united, that I have the support of the vast majority of our delegates, and that they trust me, and they trust our government to do this delicate work,” he said.

“They understand the complexities of the moment we’re in by supporting the interests of British Columbians and that’s all I ask for.”

This report by Wolfgang Depner, The Canadian Press, was first published Dec. 22, 2025.

Vancouver student gets to the root of why it's so hard to put down your phone

Henry Chuang, a Grade 10 student at St. George's School in Vancouver, is now a finalist in a global science competition

Author of the article: By Denise Ryan

Published Dec 21, 2025

“Everyone has been here: scrolling on social media instead of doing work ... ”

That’s the opening line from a video made by Henry Chuang, a Grade 10 student at St. George’s School in Vancouver. Chuang noticed he had a recurring habit of going on social media and procrastinating. He didn’t want to, but he was “stuck.”

“I didn’t want to keep scrolling, but my mind was getting tricked into it,” said Chuang.

It was impacting three major areas of his life: his studies, his cross-country running and the artwork he does in his spare time.

Now, Chuang’s short two-minute video on the problem — one that affects anyone with a smartphone, no matter their age — is one of 16 finalists for the 11th annual Breakthrough Junior Challenge, an international competition that invites students between the ages of 13 and 18 to create videos that “bring to life a concept or theory in the life sciences, physics or mathematics.”

The finalists hail from around the globe and were chosen from more than 2,500 applicants. They were evaluated based on their ability to communicate science concepts in the most engaging and illuminating ways.

The top winner, who will be announced in early 2026, will receive a \$250,000 post-secondary scholarship. Their teacher will also receive \$50,000 and their school will get a new science lab valued at \$100,000. The prizes are sponsored by foundations established by Sergey Brin, Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg, Yuri and Julia Milner, and Anne Wojcicki, as well as contest partners the Khan Academy and the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory.

Chuang isn't focused on the prize. Like any kid his age, he's still trying to get off his phone.

The fact that his videography skills were self-taught from YouTube videos illustrates a certain irony: he's a finalist, in part, because he spent time on his phone.

What he wants to do is get the use of it under control.

In the video, Chuang unpacks what happens when work required to achieve a goal — whether short-term like studying for a test or long-term like his dream of starting an Instagram account that explores the intersection of beauty and science — conflicts with one's impulse to scroll through social media.

"Each trigger of social media activates a brain region," said Chuang.

Social-media architects rely on social-media triggers like notifications, vibrant colours and engaging story-lines so users get a dopamine hit, explains Chuang.

When the dorsal anterior singular cortex clocks that goals and actions don't line up, we experience cognitive dissonance, explains Chuang. To cope with the mental discomfort or anguish experienced by two conflicting beliefs, desires or goals, synapses fire and push the problem to the anterior insula.

"That alert hits the amygdala and, like an alarm clock, it starts beeping constantly, which turns up discomfort and guilt."

Then the prefrontal cortex jumps in and "reframes it," so it doesn't seem so bad.

"This is called rationalization," said Chuang.

The hippocampus joins the party, retrieving positive memories that make the rationalization feel true.

"The hippocampus is quite devious," said Chuang. "It convinces your brain that social media actually helps you, not harms you."

Then comes the comforting flood of dopamine.

The dorsal striatum, in charge of habit-forming circuitry, loves that dopamine flood, and this reinforces the bad habit.

This is called the cognitive dissonance loop, and it's what keeps us stuck, explains Chuang.

So how do we overcome this?

"You have to get used to the discomfort," said Chuang.

Meeting difficult challenges ultimately leads to the same dopamine rewards that social media does: getting things done that bring you closer to your goals also stimulates dopamine release, even though it seems harder at first.

"It's something me and my friends talk about all the time," said Chuang.

For Chuang, figuring out how to creatively illustrate the cognitive dissonance process in a video helped him understand the brain's chain reactions. But he also knows the human brain's response to social-media triggers — highlight reels, notification pings, bright colours, reward badges — won't change just because you understand the process.

"You have to consciously apply interventions thousands of times every day," said Chuang.

To help himself, he uses an app called One Sec, which helps control the impulse to mindlessly scroll by linking to social-media apps on his phone, and interrupting the urge to scroll by diverting attention and using interventions like encouraging a pause to take a breath.

But he isn't encouraging the world to log off social media completely. He, of course, hopes people will watch his Breakthrough Junior Challenge video on YouTube.

After all, the 'likes' count, and the dopamine feels so good.

Valentine's Day Quotes

"My heart is, and always will be, yours." — Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility

"You are my greatest adventure." — The Incredibles

"Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be." — Robert Browning

"You had me at hello." — Jerry Maguire

"Where there is love, there is life." — Mahatma Gandhi

From 'N̓amgis First Nation

Notice to 'N̓amgis Members

'N̓amgis First Nation is sharing the following update with our members regarding a recent fraud investigation involving funds intended for the construction of the new Wellness and Treatment Centre.

Earlier this year, the Nation was targeted by a sophisticated fraud scheme carried out by external actors, in which a fraudulent email redirected a payment meant for the contractors working on the Wellness Centre project.

Out of respect for the integrity of the investigation and legal processes, the Nation did not publicly comment in order to not jeopardize the ongoing investigation. The RCMP has now reached a stage where information can be shared publicly and has issued a media release outlining their investigation and actions.

We are relieved to share that a significant portion of the funds were frozen by investigators and will be returned through court processes. The Nation continues to work toward recovering the remaining funds, and insurance coverage may apply to some of the losses.

'N̓amgis First Nation takes financial stewardship and accountability seriously. In response to this incident, we are reviewing and strengthening internal financial and cybersecurity procedures to help prevent similar incidents in the future.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Alert Bay RCMP and partner agencies for their swift action, professionalism, and dedication in disrupting this fraud and protecting Nation resources.

Members are encouraged to review the Alert Bay RCMP media release for further details. Updates will be shared as appropriate.

Valentine's Day Quotes

"Love is friendship that has caught on fire." — Ann Landers

"Every love story is beautiful, but ours is my favorite." — Unknown

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage." — Lao Tzu

"Love is the beauty of the soul." — Saint Augustine

Vatican's return of Indigenous artifacts applauded, but is it really a gift?

By The Canadian Press

Published: November 22, 2025

When the Vatican announced this month that Pope Leo was giving a “gift” of 62 Indigenous artifacts to Canadian bishops, to be returned to their original communities, some Indigenous leaders celebrated it as a continuation of a reconciliation journey.

While Nisga’a scholar Amy Parent said she was pleased for the communities involved, many questions are left unanswered, and the biggest one is: “Why did it take so long?”

“I’m really happy for them, but also, again, it feels really bittersweet to know that one of the richest, wealthiest churches in the world has taken so long to do the right thing,” said Parent, who is a UNESCO Co-Chair in transforming Indigenous knowledge research governance and repatriation.

The Vatican said it had received the items — including an Inuit kayak, war clubs, a headdress, masks and wampum belts — as “patrimony” for the Vatican Missionary Exhibition of 1925, “to bear witness to the faith and cultural richness of peoples.”

She also didn’t accept the items were “gifts to the Vatican,” saying that nothing given to a colonizer or religious institution during “a time of genocide” could be considered a gift.

The announcement of the return of the artifacts on Nov. 15 also framed them as a “gift” to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, and they will be reunited with their originating communities after their arrival to Canada next month.

Cody Groat, an assistant professor in the department of history and the Indigenous Studies program at Western University said there was a long history of Indigenous nations giving items to settler societies or to church entities to build diplomatic relationships.

But when the artifacts in the Vatican’s collection were taken away in the 1920s, Groat said, it was a “coercive period” with the Indian Act at “its most assimilative,” cultural practices were “actively banned” and the residential school system was in full effect.

“So, when the Vatican is using this language of giftings, we have to be quite hesitant,” said Groat, who is a band member of the Six Nations of the Grand River in Ontario.

Groat said he had been following the story of the artifacts for many years, and the return was “a long time coming.”

The Vatican said the return was initiated by the late Pope Francis as a part of his 2022 papal visit to Canada.

“So, it’s been a very long, drawn-out process. There are still some flaws with the system we have in place, but I think it’s going to be the start of a good turning point,” said Groat.

Hugh Braker, a member of the political executive of the First Nations Summit in B.C., said it was “very, very happy” moment for him when he heard the news.

Braker said the artifacts were taken away during the potlatch ban, which was established in the 1880s to assimilate Indigenous peoples by targeting their cultural, social, and economic practices. The ban was lifted in 1951.

“The unfortunate thing is that when the priests, Indian agents, and police raided some places of the potlatches, they would seize the regalia. Sometimes, they would keep some,” said Braker.

Braker said many people from Indigenous communities were aware their goods and regalia had been seized, and they would go to museums and the Catholic church to find them.

He said he hasn’t received any notice outlining the return of items. But he said there are questions arising from the process, including how the items will be transported home.

“That’s going to be a big problem, because many of these things will be fragile by now,” said Braker.

The Vatican has said the items will be returned to Canada on Dec. 6 and housed at the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa, before they will be reunited with their originating communities.

Parent characterized the Vatican’s process as a “state-to-state, colonial approach” for the artifacts’ return.

Groat said the items were associated with a Vatican exhibition in 1925 focused on the church’s missionary successes.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops said in a statement that more information about the artifacts will be available in early December.

“The CCCB remains committed to ensuring that all communications around the return of these items align with an Indigenous-led process,” read the statement.

Groat said the Canadian Museum of History would assess the items and their condition before transferring them to national Indigenous organizations like the Assembly of First Nations, and from there, the relevant First Nations.

Braker said seeing their ultimate return would uplift Indigenous communities.

“The government tried very, very hard to stomp out our culture, our way of life, and our religion and our governance, but it certainly brings joy to my heart when I see young Indigenous children today singing songs in their own language and dancing,” said Braker

“I think it’s going to repair some of the First Nation people’s culture, and be able to use their artifacts from their ancestors, and it’s also going to give some impetus to the First Nations people to rescue their languages and their culture.”

Nono Shen, The Canadian Press

QUOTE

“Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.” Mahatma Gandhi

First Nation seeks Aboriginal title over Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam areas

by Kenneth Chan Nov. 19, 2025

The City of Port Coquitlam is informing and aiming to reassure residents and other private property owners that public and private property rights will remain protected, as a land claim involving the Kwikwetlem First Nation is currently going through a provincially-led process.

As it turns out, like the other First Nations court cases that were daylighted in recent months, the Kwikwetlem claim has been going through the legal process for a decade.

In 2016, Kwikwetlem filed a claim in court asserting Aboriginal title to several major parcels of land in southwest Port Coquitlam and southeast Coquitlam.

According to the municipal government, the litigation process is currently in a state of “abeyance,” which means the court case is temporarily paused, as a negotiation process led by the provincial government is currently occurring outside of the court setting.

The land claim area by the Kwikwetlem notably entails the entirety of the 244-acre former Riverview Hospital site and the 59-acre Colony Farm Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, which are owned by the provincial government.

They are seeking to claim the adjacent 700-acre ʔéxətəm Regional Park, which is owned by Metro Vancouver Regional District and was previously known as Colony Farm Regional Park up until 2023.

Additionally, the First Nation is also seeking Aboriginal title over several major properties owned by the City of Port Coquitlam, specifically the 37-acre Gates Park — one of the city’s most heavily used sports and recreation sites, and where a new soccer training hub had been planned but was downsized earlier this year due to rising costs — and multiple undeveloped lots collectively known as South Shaughnessy.

Kwikwetlem has two reserves in the immediate area, adjacent to their land claim areas, totalling over 200 acres.

Although the court case remains paused while the provincial government works through negotiations and review, the City states it is taking a firm stance on protecting municipal lands.

“We have, and will continue to, vigorously defend public ownership of these lands, along with private property rights in our jurisdiction as the provincial government leads a process in relation to all of this,” said Port Coquitlam mayor Brad West in a statement today.

West emphasized that the Aboriginal title pursuit relates only to publicly owned land. With recent media attention and public concern expressed over the separate Cowichan Tribes’ Richmond and Haida First Nation’s Haida Gwaii court rulings, as well as the Secwepemc First Nation’s active court case seeking Aboriginal title over a massive area of the B.C. Interior — including all public and privately-owned lands in Kamloops and Sun Peaks — Port Coquitlam’s municipal officials say they have been fielding questions from concerned residents, especially homeowners.

“At this time, there are no civil claims initiated by any First Nations involving private property within the City of Port Coquitlam,” the City noted in a release today. “No private lands within Port Coquitlam are currently the subject of litigation.”

“We will ensure the public is kept informed,” added West.

Sources previously told Daily Hive Urbanized that the provincial government’s efforts to identify new uses and create a master plan for the Riverview Hospital site, including potentially building new modern, substantial mental health and addictions treatment facilities, have stalled because of Kwikwetlem’s opposition to having a greater concentration of such facilities in the area. BC Housing previously performed some public consultation on the site’s future from 2012 to 2015, and the entire process was restarted in 2021, but halted again soon after.

Without mentioning the ongoing litigation, provincial officials also told Daily Hive Urbanized in 2023 that the former Riverview Hospital site’s planning process is fully contingent on the First Nation’s participation.

In 2021, the provincial government opened the Red Fish Healing Centre for Mental Health and Addiction on the former Riverview Hospital lands.

Critics, including opposition provincial parties, have challenged the B.C. NDP-led provincial government’s approach to defending public and private properties in court, as well as its broader handling of reconciliation efforts.

Last month, when they informed property owners impacted by the Cowichan Tribes’ decision, City of Richmond officials were highly critical of the provincial government and warned of the major negative implications for both public and private properties.

There are growing concerns that there are many more Aboriginal title cases that have been quietly going through the court process for years, but have yet to be unearthed.

Earlier this month, Elenore Sturko, the independent MLA for the riding of Surrey-Cloverdale, called on Premier David Eby to publicly disclose all lawsuits filed by First Nations asserting Aboriginal title over land in the province — particularly where those claims may overlap with existing private property.

In the case of the Cowichan Tribes and their Richmond land claims, an August 2025 ruling by trial judge Justice Barbara Young put Aboriginal title above fee-simple title ownership — the standard form of private property ownership in Canada, and the foundation of the economy and overall society. In court, the Cowichan Tribes were pursuing Aboriginal title over public property, but kept the door open to potentially pursue private property in the future. Justice Young, however, granted them both public and private lands.

There are growing concerns that such court cases, particularly the initial one dealing with the Cowichan Tribes, set a precedent for millions of other fee-simple title ownership properties across the province and elsewhere in Canada, where there are outstanding First Nations land claims.

This could have a real material impact on property owners’ equity, property values, and their ability to sell their properties and obtain mortgages and insurance. Without legal certainty, there are also concerns that this will deter economic investment and attraction in B.C. It also reduces the amount of publicly-owned assets for the benefit of all residents.

The municipal, provincial, and federal governments and the Musqueam Indian Band are appealing Justice Young’s decision. However, the appeal process could take years, going through the top courts of both B.C. and Canada.

Eby says B.C. may revise DRIPA legislation, worries court is 'in driver's seat'

Gitxaala chief says they've had to resort to courts to force province to modernize rights claims

Andrew Kurjata · CBC News · Posted: Dec 05, 2025

B.C. Premier David Eby says he is open to revising the province's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA).

His comments come after the B.C. Court of Appeal found that the legislation is incompatible with the province's current system used to grant mineral rights.

The ruling, released Friday, was in response to a legal challenge from the Gitxaala and Ehaattesaht First Nations against the province.

The nations have argued the current system of allowing mineral claims to be registered automatically for a small fee online violates the duty to consult impacted First Nations, as laid out by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The provincial DRIPA legislation, which was intended to incorporate UNDRIP, was adopted by the province with unanimous support from all parties in the B.C. legislature in 2019.

Gitxaala Chief Coun. Linda Innes said her nation has long advocated for the province to update its mineral rights regime, saying the current system results in people staking claim to their territory without the nation's knowledge.

"There is absolutely no consultation with the nation, no notification," she said. "Anybody with a few dollars can stake a claim online," she said, calling it an "antiquated" system.

She added she'd rather work directly with the province but said her nation had to resort to the courts because the province was "dragging its feet," on modernizing laws.

A duty to consult

While all three judges in Friday's ruling agreed that the province had a duty to consult First Nations, they differed in their interpretation of the legislation and how that would impact the province's ability to manage mineral rights.

Two of the judges, Justice Dickson and Justice Iyer, wrote that allowing the current mineral rights regime to continue meant "adopting an unduly narrow approach to the legal effect of the Declaration Act and UNDRIP."

"Properly interpreted," they wrote, the adoption of the declaration has an immediate impact on all laws in B.C., and that in cases where there are inconsistencies, it is incumbent on the province to immediately resolve them to bring them in line with UNDRIP, and for the court to intervene when they fail to do so.

UNDRIP and the current mineral claims rules in the province, the justices said, "are inconsistent."

The dissenting opinion, Justice Riley, disagreed, arguing that while the executive branch of government — meaning elected leaders — has a duty to bring laws in line with UNDRIP, it is not the court's place to get involved in areas where there are inconsistencies between existing laws and the new legislation.

"Nowhere in the Declaration Act is the judicial branch invited or called upon to adjudicate claims of inconsistency between UNDRIP and British Columbia's laws, and doing so would take the court outside of its proper role in our constitutional democracy," he said.

Eby worried court 'in driver's seat'

Speaking to reporters at an unrelated news conference in Surrey, B.C., Eby said he had similar worries.

"[The decision] potentially puts courts in the driver's seat, instead of British Columbians," he said. He added the government would be reviewing the decision and "if necessary, amend the Declaration Act to ensure that our original intention when we introduced it is clear."

"It is absolutely crucial that it is British Columbians, through their elected representatives, that remain in control of this process, not the courts," he said of implementing UNDRIP, noting that the province's work with First Nations has delivered "billions of dollars" in the form of economic projects and he didn't want to see that undone by backlash to court rulings.

The opposition B.C. Conservatives, meanwhile, responded to the ruling by again calling on the governing NDP to repeal the DRIPA legislation altogether.

"This ruling highlights exactly what happens when government tries to legislate reconciliation through vague and undefined promises," said MLA Scott McInnis, deputy critic for Indigenous relations and reconciliation in a written statement. "Uncertainty helps nobody."

Government to government

Eby, though, said he remains committed to working with First Nations, and the most likely outcome would be that the government amends the DRIPA legislation to put more explicit power back in the hands of elected officials.

"Too much rides on it, in terms of our province's prosperity and certainty going forward," Eby said, adding the courts "seem to have some confusion" around "what was clearly intended when we introduced this legislation."

For her part, Chief Coun. Innes said she would much rather work with the province outside of the court system in a government-to-government relationship.

"I hope that they're ready to roll up their sleeves and work with us," she said. "We are here and we're looking forward to working with B.C. and all parties to implement today's precedent-setting decision."

B.C.'s new Pattullo Bridge receives First Nations name — sta'áwasəm Bridge

By Amy Judd Global News

Posted December 8, 2025

The new Pattullo Bridge has been given a First Nations name from the Kwantlen First Nation and Musqueam Indian Band: sta'áwasəm Bridge.

The bridge, which is beside the original Pattullo Bridge, now has a connected deck and is preparing to welcome traffic, according to the B.C. government.

Traffic will begin shifting to the sta'áwasəm Bridge from the Pattullo Bridge in phases over the coming weeks. The new bridge has four wider lanes with a centre median and barrier-separated walking and cycling lanes.

sta'áwasəm can be understood as “a space where you can view the river.” The English name is Riverview.

“sta'áwasəm Bridge is more than just a name. It acknowledges the history of these lands, and represents the preservation of culture and language,” Transportation Minister Mike Farnworth said in a statement issued by his department.

“This new bridge is going to transform the region’s transportation network, support people and businesses in the region, and strengthen B.C.’s economy for generations.”

An official opening day has not yet been announced; however, the province says that when the bridge opens, a single lane of northbound traffic will exit to eastbound East Columbia via the new off-ramp.

The statement also quoted Chief Marilyn Gabriel of the Kwantlen First Nation saying that traditional names are not given lightly and carry “reminders and responsibilities.”

“With the new name, we honour our past, present and future, and the importance of this area to both Kwantlen and Musqueam,” her quote read. “We also reflect on our long-standing connections to sacred lands and resources on both sides of the bridge crossing and sta'áw (Fraser River). The name reminds us that with many connections shared in this area, we all are responsible to honour and uphold its well-being and generosity it has provided for countless generations.”

‘Transformational’: Wei Wai Kum FN lauds wind power partnership

by Dean Stoltz for cheknews.ca

January 17, 2025

A Campbell River First Nation is celebrating what could be a life changing agreement to produce wind power on the North Island.

The Wei Wai Kum Nation has partnered with Capstone Infrastructure of Toronto to harvest power using the wind, and sell it to BC Hydro.

They hope to build 30 windmills just north of Campbell River in the Brewster Lake area.

“I think there’s a lot more to learn but you’re right on that with the 30 towers and a generating capacity of I think around five to seven megawatts each, so the entire project is looking at just under 200 megawatts of capacity,” Wei Wai Kum Chief Councillor Chris Roberts told CHEK News Friday.

Capstone Infrastructure is “a developer, owner, and operator of clean and renewable energy projects across North America,” according to its website.

“Capstone’s portfolio includes approximately 885 MW installed capacity across 35 facilities.”

A large Capstone wind farm went operational near Jenner, Alberta last June.

The Brewster Wind farm application on the Island has been accepted by BC Hydro, which put out a Call for Power last year.

“This is our first call for power in 15 years where we’ve gone out to the private sector, the IPP community, Independent Power Producer community to look for opportunities to provide us with more electricity. We see electricity demand growing in this province so we need more power for that. While we have Site C coming on, the province is growing and we need to meet that growth. We want to do that with clean, renewable power,” said BC Hydro’s Ted Olynyk.

The towers themselves will stand 100 to 120 metres tall with a rotor diameter of 70 metres.

“They’re definitely bigger than what we’ve seen in the past as every year that goes by the turbines that are available in the market get bigger and have higher generation capacity than they used to,” said Capstone communications manager Megan Hunter.

The BC Hydro’s Call for Power stipulated that companies partner with First Nations.

The Wei Wai Kum Nation now has a 51 per cent stake in the Brewster Wind Farm project.

“It would be transformational for Wei Wai Kum if the projections check out as far as the dividend that would be paid out to us on an annual basis,” Chief Roberts said.

He adds this new power could allow for other opportunities in the future.

“One of the things that connected the dots for us was over the years we’ve been approached with some really interesting proposals such as a hydrogen facility, land-based salmon farming and more industrial activities and what we’ve learned is that BC Hydro doesn’t actually have the available power to commit to those projects,” he said.

The partnership will now engage in extensive field studies in the Brewster Lake area and engagement with local communities about the project,

“That’s really where we’re at now is getting more site-specific information and that technical level stuff to be able to refine the estimates to better understand what type of resource we’re talking about here,” said Roberts. “We certainly intend for them to be built responsibly and mitigate impacts on wildlife.”

Science Nathan Liewicki (new window) · CBC News

Rare instance of polar bear cub being adopted near Churchill verified by scientists

From ici.radio-canada.ca

December 22, 2025

Only the 13th case of cub adoption in the western Hudson Bay area, say researchers.

Scientists studying polar bears were greeted with a most unexpected surprise during a recent tracking expedition in northeastern Manitoba.

A polar bear mother and her cub were walking near Churchill in mid-November when scientists saw her with a second cub, which they were able to verify was not her own. It marks just the 13th such case of cub adoption within the western Hudson Bay subpopulation.

“When we got confirmation that this was an adoption, I had a lot of mixed feelings, but mostly good,” Alysa McCall, director of conservation outreach and a staff scientist with Polar Bears International, said in a video provided to media.

“It's just another reason why this species is so incredible, why they're so fascinating and interesting, and it gives you a lot of hope when you realize that polar bears may be looking out for each other out there.

Evan Richardson, a polar bear research scientist with Environment and Climate Change Canada, was in the field back in March. His team of researchers caught up with the mother coming out of the denning area in Wapusk National Park, south of Churchill.

During that sighting, the mother only had one cub with her, Richardson said on a separate video provided to media.

Fast forward to the fall and Richardson was taken aback seeing the family of two having become a

family of three. Two of the bears had been previously tagged with GPS-tracking collars and the newly adopted cub didn't have one.

It's not that frequent though because in our long-term study we have over 4,600 individual bears that we've known over the last 45 years, and literally hundreds and hundreds of litters [of cubs], he said of the adoption.

Researchers estimate the mother is about five years old, while the cubs are both around 10-11 months.

Richardson doesn't know for certain why the mother adopted the lone-roaming cub, but he has a hypothesis.

We really think it's just because [polar bears are] so maternally charged and such good mothers, and they just can't leave a cub crying on the tundra. So they pick them up and take them along with them, he said.

Polar bear cubs typically stay with their mothers for between two and two-and-a-half years.

It's not a lot of time to learn how to be a polar bear, but they do soak up a lot of lessons during that time. The survival rate for cubs to make it to adulthood is around 50 per cent ... but if we learn a cub has no mom, it has almost no chance, McCall said.

The adopted cub now has a good chance to reach adulthood, she said.

It's unknown what happened to the adopted cub's biological mother, but Richardson hopes the genetic data sample his team was able to get from the cub will be able to provide some insight.

Environment and Climate Change Canada partners with both Polar Bears International and the University of Alberta's polar bear science program to collect data on the bears through GPS collars. The movements of tagged bears can also be tracked online ([new window](#)).

Female polar bears in the western Hudson Bay area have been collared for decades, though it only happens to about 10 of them annually, McCall said.

Less frequent is a polar bear cub being adopted, rarer still is seeing it in person.

The bears need all the help they can get these days with climate change, Richardson said. Females have the opportunity to pick up another cub and care for it, and successfully wean it. That's a good thing for bears in Churchill.

Churchill polar bear adopts 2nd cub in wild

In a rare occurrence, a polar bear in Churchill is taking care of her offspring and another cub that is not her own. Evan Richardson, a polar bear research scientist with Environment and Climate Change Canada, is studying the family.

Ironies of the Penal System by Dennis Challeen in 1986 he was a U.S. Judge for 30 years

Prisoners

We want them to have self-worth . . . So we destroy their self-worth.

We want them to be responsible . . . So we take away all their responsibilities.

We want them to be part of our community . . . So we isolate them from our community.

We want them to be positive and constructive . . . So we degrade them and make them useless.

We want them to be trustworthy . . . So we put them where there is no trust.

We want them to be nonviolent . . . So we put them where there is violence all around them.

We want them to be kind and loving people . . . So we subject them to hatred and cruelty.

We want them to quit being the tough guy . . . So we put them where the tough guy is respected.

We want them to quit hanging around losers . . . So we put all the losers in the state under one roof.

We want them to quit exploiting us . . . So we put them where they exploit each other.

We want them to take control of their lives, own their problems and quit being a parasite . . . So we make them totally dependent on us.

Source: Challeen, D. (1986) Making it right: A common sense approach to criminal justice, Melius & Peterson Publishing Corp

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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)

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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