



**POLICY BRIEF 2022**

## **A Pathway to Develop a Collective, Provincial British Columbia First Nations Water Declaration**

*Kimbaya Carriere*

The LEVEL Youth Policy Program takes place on the traditional and unceded territories of the *xʷməθkʷəjəm* (Musqueam), *Sḵwx̱wú7mesh* (Squamish) & *səlilwətaɣ* (Tseil-Waututh) Coast Salish peoples.

#### GRAPHIC DESIGN

And Also Too

#### COVER ILLUSTRATION

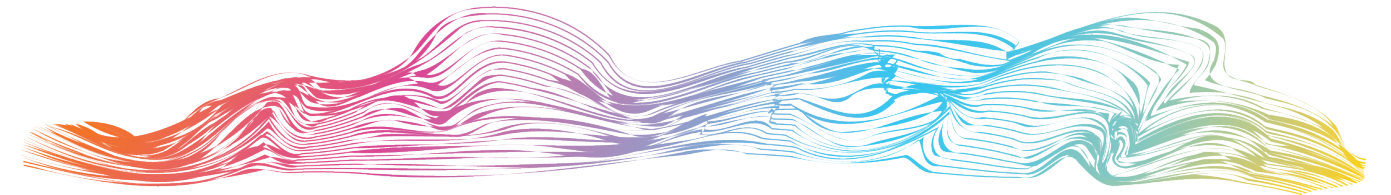
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#### HEADSHOT PHOTOGRAPHY

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# About the LEVEL Initiative

LEVEL is a youth engagement initiative of Vancouver Foundation that aims to address racial inequity. We do this by investing in the leadership capacity of Indigenous, racialized, immigrant, and refugee youth to create more opportunities throughout the non-profit and charitable sector.

Despite being the fastest-growing youth populations in British Columbia, Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee youth don't have the same opportunities as other young people. Race continues to be a factor that hinders their ability to have a say in decisions that impact their lives.

LEVEL empowers these youth by building their capacity to challenge and change those systems that hinder their ability to build a more just world.

### LEVEL consists of three pillars of work to advance racial equity

1. LEVEL Youth Policy Program
2. LEVEL Youth Organizing
3. LEVEL BIPOC Granting

### About the LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP)

The LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP) brings together young people between the ages of 19 and 29 from across British Columbia who identify as being Indigenous or racialized immigrants or refugees. Indigenous and racialized Newcomer youth are dispropor-

tionately impacted by certain public policies but are rarely included in the development and implementation of public policy process. The LEVEL YPP aims to provide these youth with equitable training and leadership opportunities to better navigate the public policy landscape, and to develop new tools and skills to influence, shape, and advocate for policy changes that are relevant in their own communities. Having young people directly involved in shaping policies that impact their lives is essential to creating systemic, meaningful change. The LEVEL YPP's training is grounded from and within Indigenous peoples' worldviews, which the program acknowledges, could vary from person-to-person or nation-to-nation. Indigenous worldviews place a large emphasis on connections to the land. This perspective views the land as sacred; where everything and everyone is related and connected; where the quality of the relationships formed are key in life; where what matters is the success and well-being of the community, and where there can be many truths as they are based on individual lived experiences.<sup>1</sup> As such, an important premise of this training is to centre and place a particular focus on the fact that the work that has gone into developing this training, as well as the training itself, has taken and will take place on unceded (never given away/stolen) territories of the *həŋq 'əmin 'əŋ*-speaking Musqueam peoples, of the Halkomelem-speaking Tseil-Waututh peoples, and of the *sníchim*-speaking *Sḵwx̱wú7mesh* (Squamish) peoples.

1. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-peoples-worldviews-vs-western-worldviews>

# Biography

## Kimbaya Carriere



*Kimbaya Carriere is a versatile Franco-Métis and Mexican-Mestiza Project Coordinator with a background in successfully executing water projects. She is originally from Treaty 1, traditionally known in Cree as win-nipi, ᐃᓄᓂᐃ (murky waters), now referred to as Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is from the heart of Manitoba's French community, located at the confluence of the Red River and the Assiniboine River.*

*In April 2020, Kimbaya graduated from the University of Winnipeg with a Bachelor of Science.*

*She works with Indigenous Peoples in BC to advance their capacity and ensure they are resourced, united, and recognized to actively exercise governance and jurisdiction of all fresh waters in their traditional territories. She dreams that one day Indigenous communities across Turtle Island will be recognized as the primary stewards and decision-makers of water and aquatic resources in their traditional territory.*

# Executive Summary

*First Nations in British Columbia hold a sacred responsibility and relationship to water and should be included in all decision-making around water.*

Women and Two-Spirit individuals, youth, Elders and Knowledge Holders all hold important duties and responsibilities to water. Each of their voices and stories must be uplifted and empowered in any conversation surrounding water. For Indigenous Peoples, water sustains health, spirituality, and physical well-being. Indigenous Peoples have stewarded watersheds and coastal and marine environments across Turtle Island for millennia. Many BC First Nations have created or revitalized laws protecting streams, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and much more. First Nations in BC have taken care of and managed water for the benefit of present and future generations. They continue to apply Indigenous Knowledge to monitor creek levels and temperature and use traditional fishing and aquaculture techniques like clam gardens, salmon ceremonies, and fish weirs. Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island and globally are raising their voices to draw attention not only to water issues faced in their communities but also to water issues that affect all Canadians and the world.

Through the hands of colonialism, resource extraction, and capitalism, water in so-called “Canada” continues to be disrespected, misused, and polluted by industrial development, agriculture, and urbanization. On top of it all, colonialism and capitalism are fueling the effects of climate change that Indigenous Peoples, alongside other groups, tend to carry the burden of through environmental racism. We must respect, appreciate and take care of our water to have a wholistic approach to climate change. In so-called “Canada,” water

has been managed through a series of federal and provincial laws designed for various economic and environmental purposes. Many argue that there is a conflict between “industry-specific legislation” that grants permission to use water and “environmental legislation” that attempts to minimize damage caused by resource development. It is also often the case that water in First Nations territories is degraded by activities outside or adjacent to communities and traditional lands.

While the BC First Nations Water Rights Strategy (2013) is currently being renewed by the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), BC First Nations could benefit from a complementary high-level wholistic collective BC First Nations water declaration that can be adopted and supported by crown provincial and local governments and water allies. A collective BC First Nation Declaration can guide and clarify the sacred responsibility and relationship First Nations have with water to the general public, government, and water allies. BC First Nations must be a key player in leading and developing a wholistic Water Declaration that ties in all the roles and spaces that water plays in their community's social, cultural, and environmental dimensions.

# Background

*Water is life. Water sustains us, flows between us, within us, and replenishes us. Water is the blood of Mother Earth and, as such, cleanses not only herself but all living things.*

Water comes in many forms, and all are needed for Mother Earth's health and our health. The sacred water element teaches us that we can have great strength to transform even the tallest mountain while being soft, pliable, and flexible. Water gives us the spiritual teaching that we, too, flow into the Great Ocean at the end of our life journey. Water shapes the land and gives us the great gifts of rivers, lakes, ice, and oceans. Water is the home of many living things that contribute to the health and well-being of everything not in the water (Assembly of First Nations).

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations in BC, have a sacred responsibility to water and should be included in all decision-making around water. Women and Two-Spirit Individuals, youth, Elders, and Knowledge Holders all hold important duties and responsibilities to care for water. Each of their voices and stories must be uplifted and empowered.

Through colonization and forced assimilation, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been strategically disempowered to make decisions and manage water. Those who assumed power decided to abuse and destroy water through resource exploitation. Because of those decisions, water in so-called "Canada," and globally, is sick. Indigenous Peoples must

continue to assert and reclaim their roles and responsibilities to heal water so that we can continue to have a healthy relationship with water.

The first treaty that was made was between the earth and the sky. It was an agreement to work together. We build all of our treaties on that original treaty (see books written by Aimée Craft). First Nations in BC have laws and protocols to ensure clean waters for all living things.

For Indigenous communities across Turtle Island to be recognized as the primary stewards and decision-makers of water in their traditional territory, Indigenous Peoples need to have a diverse approach, ensuring that they are involved in every part of Canadian nationhood. This paper will focus on one of many approaches the First Nations of BC could focus on.



***Through colonization and forced assimilation, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been strategically disempowered to make decisions and manage water.***

## JURISDICTIONAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

BC First Nations hold jurisdictional and legal obligations to participate in water governance and stewardship. According to traditional law, the constitution and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), First Nations have the right to free, prior, and informed consent to developments on their lands, waters, and coastal seas. They have the right to govern themselves and the right to self-determination. They have the right to pursue economic, social, and cultural development. They continue to exercise the rights to ownership and control over the traditional lands, territories, and natural resources. The internationally recognized right to self-determination gives First Nations the power to make decisions based upon the laws, customs, and traditional knowledge to sustain the waters for all life and future generations. Treaties and modern agreements have affirmed and further protected the relationship with water. This section will explore the various jurisdictional and legal tools that the First Nations of BC hold on at an international, national, and provincial scale.

## INTERNATIONAL

### UNDRIP

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) sets out the international minimum standards and laws that guide the protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples. UNDRIP was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2007 and later endorsed by Canada in 2010. Two articles 25 and 32 from UNDRIP relate more to water. Here is a brief description of them:

#### Article 25:

States that Indigenous Peoples have the right to "maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard."

#### Article 32:

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources;
2. Indigenous Peoples are concerned through their own representative institutions to obtain their free and informed consent before the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources; and,
3. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate the adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impacts.

## COLONIAL CANADIAN FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL LAWS

For most of Canada's history, there has been no comprehensive plan to protect water. Water is managed through a mix of mainly provincial and some federal statutes. This section will examine the laws and regulations that make up the fabric of water management and protection in Canada.

## FEDERAL LEGISLATIONS

### Constitution Act (1867)

The Constitution Act of 1867 sets out the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments. The Constitution Act does not provide any details for jurisdiction over water. However, it does state that water flowing through or adjacent to First Nations reserve lands is under federal jurisdiction, as per section 91(24) Constitution Act, 1867. Consequently, the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), Environment Canada (EC) and Health Canada (HC) are primarily responsible for providing safe water and potable water on-reserve.

In 1982 the Constitution Act added Section 35, which specifically recognizes and affirms the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. It states that “Existing Aboriginal land rights can no longer be extinguished without the consent of those Aboriginal Peoples holding interests in those lands”. So Section 35 recognizes Aboriginal rights but does not create or define Aboriginal rights. For many First Nations, because there is no explicit authority declared in the Canadian Constitution, both Section 35 rights and treaty rights that acknowledge Indigenous water rights supersede federal and provincial water jurisdiction.

### Further Federal Legislations

The federal government does not have any legislation that deals with water resource management, the rights to potable water, the protection of water, or its intersection to health, culture, and social wellbeing. However, they have environmental and fisheries legislation that impacts water management in BC. Most federal acts and regulations relating to water deal with inter-jurisdictional issues and

national concerns for water protection. The crown provincial governments have the power to regulate, allocate and manage water. If an issue of national concern arises, the Canada Water Act allows the Minister of Environment to uphold the responsibility for only that issue or watershed to the federal government.

### Federal Water-Related Laws:

- Canada Water Act
- Dominion Water Power Act
- Federal Environmental Protection Act
- Fisheries Act
- Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act
- Federal Species at Risk Act (SARA)
- Canada Oil & Gas Operations Act
- International Boundaries Water Treaties Act
- Navigable Waters Protection Act
- Ocean Act
- Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act

## PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIONS

There are 20 water-related provincial legislations. The Water Sustainability Act (WSA) is the Province’s primary legislation governing water resources in BC. The WSA deals with BC’s water licensing, water management, water allocation, and drought management. This legislation was developed in 1909 and amended in 2016. The Water Protection Act (1995) prohibits bulk exports and major inter-basin water transfers in BC. The Fish Protection Act (1997) introduced different mechanisms to strengthen the protection of fish and fish habitats from water allocation. The Water Utility Act, Drinking Water Protection Act, Oil and Gas Activities Act, Forest and Range Practices Act, Environmental Assessment Act, Dike Maintenance Act, Drainage Ditch and Dikes Act, and Parks Act are also key pieces of legislation that potentially impact Aboriginal Title, Rights and jurisdiction over water.

### Provincial Water-Related Laws:

- Water Sustainability Act
- Environmental Assessment Act
- Oil & Gas Activities Act
- Environmental Management Act
- Mine Act
- Hydro & Power Authority Act
- Forest & Range Practices Drinking Act
- Land Act
- Parks Act
- Water Protection Act
- Waste Management Act
- Drainage, Ditch, & Dikes Act
- Water Utility Act
- Drainage, Ditch & Dikes Act
- Water Protection Act
- Dike Maintenance Act
- Riparian Areas Protection Act
- Fish Protection Act
- Forest and Range Practices Act
- Heritage Conservation Act

### Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)

On October 24, 2019, BC was the first province to announce under Bill 41 legislation to incorporate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into provincial law. On March 30, 2022, the BC Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation released its first action plan under DRIPA. The Action Plan itself contains 89 actions planned for the next five years. In May 2022, the FNLC Policy Staff analyzed BC’s Action Plan regarding water. Out of the 89 actions identified in BC’s Action Plan, seven water-related actions exist. Here is an overview of the seven key water-related actions and their implication according to the FNLC session:

Section 1.5: Co-develop and implement new distinctions-based policy frameworks for

resource revenue-sharing and other fiscal mechanisms with Indigenous Peoples.

#### Implication: Water revenue sharing

Section 2.5: Co-develop and employ mechanisms for ensuring the minimum standard of the UN Declaration are applied in the implementations of treaties and agreements under Sections 6 and 7 of the Declaration Act, and other constructive arrangements with First Nations.

Implication: Water rights, recognition of jurisdiction and stewardship according to agreements, i.e. treaties, government-to-governments, Memorandum of Understandings, etc.

Section 2.7: Collaborates with First Nations to develop and implement strategies, plans, and initiatives for sustainable water management, and to identify policy or legislative reforms supporting Indigenous water stewardship, including shared decision-making. Co-develop the watershed security strategy with First Nations and initiate implementation of the strategy at a local watershed scale.

Section 2.8: Includes conservation and biodiversity, including species at risk.

Section 2.9: Includes BC Wild Pacific Salmon Strategy.

Section 4.35: Includes Heritage Conservation Act.



**The federal government does not have any legislation that deals with water resource management, the rights to potable water, the protection of water, or its intersection to health, culture, and social wellbeing.**

Section 4.43: Includes strategic policies and initiatives for clean and sustainable energy.

**Implications: Collaboration and co-development of BC water-related legislation, policies, strategies, action plans, and initiatives, including shared decision-making.**

### **BC and First Nations Joint Initiatives**

The BC Water Table is a new initiative composed of cross-ministerial representatives from BC and delegates from the First Nations Water Caucus. The group will work on aquatic resource priorities at a province-wide scale and will regularly engage with the BC Water Table to address policy, strategy, and legislative concerns.

The work began in 2018-2019 when the FNFC convened a Working Group of First Nations water champions and experts to develop recommendations for improving First Nations engagement in the ongoing implementation of the provincial Water Sustainability Act. These recommendations received the support of BC First Nations leadership in 2019 through resolution by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, First Nations Summit, and BC Assembly of First Nations.

These recommendations emphasized that all engagement must respect First Nations' self-determination and diversity of circumstances, needs, and priorities, with a clear understanding that no one-size-fits-all approach exists. The Working Group recommended four pathways to a holistic and robust approach to Crown engagement that supports UNDRIP:

1. Create a new, collaborative First Nations-BC Water Table to work on aquatic resource policy, strategies, and matters of common concern at a provincial level;
2. Engage through existing/emerging First Nations-BC processes and mechanisms (such as government-to-government tables and agreements);
3. Engage through regional advisory workshops as needed; and,
4. Engage through the existing written submissions process.

In July 2021, the Province formally supported the creation of the Table as part of its work to develop and implement a Watershed Security Strategy and a Watershed Security Fund. The Province seeks a mechanism for collaborating with First Nations on water-related commitments that align with its legislative obligations under the Declaration Act and the Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples. The Province is committed to building lasting, meaningful relationships with First Nations to develop policy, strategy and legislative recommendations that are sustainable, robust, broadly supported by Indigenous Peoples, and responsive of First Nations' self-government.

The Water Table is a tremendous opportunity to create a model that supports reconciliation between First Nations and the Province and makes progress on water priorities.

# Proposal

## WHAT IS A WATER DECLARATION?

A water declaration is a document that communicates the importance of water and the responsibilities one has toward it.

A water declaration sets aspirations that can help optimize water resources management, national adaptation planning, including the planning of quality and quantity infrastructure, and effective disaster risk reduction, including early warning systems.

## INDIGENOUS WATER DECLARATIONS

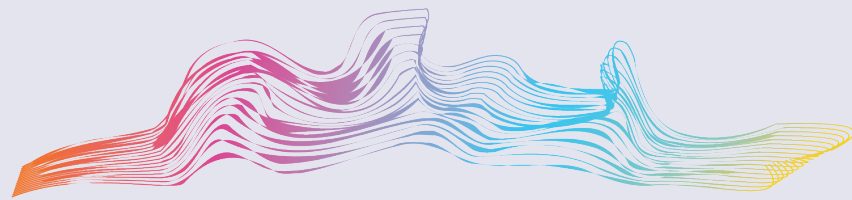
There are many different examples of water declarations that Indigenous groups or communities have created to recognize relationships with water. The following are a few examples of water declarations drawn on Indigenous legal principles and understandings of responsibilities and obligations to affirm values and commitments to water. What's important to note here is that these declarations affirm and ensure that their water-related activities and work is happening on their own terms.

### **Indigenous Water Declarations Across Turtle Island:**

- Interior Alliance Indigenous Declaration On Water (2001)
- The Indigenous People's Kyoto Water Declaration (2003)
- Chief of Ontario Water Declaration (2008)
- Garma International Indigenous Water Declaration (2009)
- Simpcw Water Declaration (2010)
- Kitchenuhmaykoosip Innuiwug Water Declaration (2011)
- Assembly of First Nations—First Nations National Water Declaration (2014)
- Nibi Declaration Of Treaty #3 (2019)
- ʔesdilagh ʔelhdaqox Dechen Ts'edilhtan (2020)
- Siwłkʷ Water Declaration (2021)

### **Purpose of a BC First Nations wholistic water declaration**

First Nations can use a collective, wholistic, First Nation water declaration in BC to ensure that their principles, values, traditional teaching, laws, and perspectives are affirmed, shared, preserved, and upheld. This declaration can be inclusive and intersectional. It can include all the forms that water takes in the lives of the First Nations in BC, from fresh water, to snow, ice, marine, coastal, wetlands, estuaries, wastewater, and beyond. It can also be strategic to include all the different roles and responsibilities that water plays in our lives.



## **First Nations can use a collective, wholistic, First Nation water declaration in BC to ensure that their principles, values, traditional teaching, laws, and perspectives are affirmed, shared, preserved, and upheld.**

Within Canada, the First Nations of BC can already use the Assembly of First Nations—First Nations National Water Declaration. However, it is important to note that water management and stewardship are done at a provincial level rather than a federal level. Having a declaration at the same jurisdictional level where many of the management decisions are made could further incentivize the adoption of a collective, wholistic, BC First Nation water declaration by the provincial crown government.

Furthermore, a water declaration can be used to complement and create further awareness of other work that First Nations in BC are involved in, such as the BC First Nations Water Rights Strategy (2013). It could also be used as a foundational and guiding document for the water table work. Nations that are part of the water caucus (the First Nation only space) could endorse and use the water declaration as a tool to advance the priorities of a united front of First Nations in BC.

While declarations are not legally binding, meaning they cannot generally be used to enforce any legal action through the Canadian court systems, they can be used to assert aspirations and create a plan to restore traditional knowledge, systems, language and practices. They can also be used to amplify and communicate the importance of restoring the connections between the cultural priorities of First Nations in BC and water.

They can be used to affirm or recognize Indigenous legal principles by Nations, crown governments, water supporters, funders, and allies (like ENGOs and industry) to adopt, support, and pledge to move forward to a common goal with BC First Nations on water.

A collective, wholistic BC First Nation water declaration can be used by individual BC First Nations or aggregate Indigenous groups working on water issues as a building block to develop their own water declaration.

Alternatively, another option that can happen instead or simultaneously to a province-wide BC First nation water declaration is the building of further support and capacity for First Nations across BC to develop their water declaration at a nation level. This would honour and recognize that some First Nations may not want to participate at a province-wide scale and that each Nation may have its own unique and complex views, laws, and management system on water.

## **Pathways to a BC First Nations wholistic water declaration**

BC First Nations have been involved in water policy, governance, protection, stewardship, and well-being since time immemorial. If a BC First Nations wholistic water declaration is developed, it should be built upon, and complementary to, the work that has already been accomplished. This proposal acknowledges that many First Nations communities in BC are currently facing engagement fatigue and low levels of internal capacity. Therefore, a strategic plan needs to ensure that efforts are not duplicated, that it is coordinated and that it aligns with other water initiatives happening in the province. Those who are organizing and coordinating this work will also need to ensure that First Nations are resourced to participate in developing a declaration.

### **Parties that need to be involved in a collective BC First Nations wholistic water declaration:**

First Nations of BC will need to be informed and support these initiatives. Information and preliminary engagement surveys, emails, town halls, virtual gatherings, and other engagement tactics can be used to scope out interest. If support and interest are identified for this proposal, then to streamline the development of a collective BC First Nations wholistic water declaration, a regional approach of BC First Nation delegates that includes youth, Elders, and Knowledge Holders could be set up. Once delegates are identified, a tier-1 committee could be formed. The committee delegate would be asked to bring forward and share information and knowledge related to forming a collective BC First Nations wholistic water declaration and then to distribute and share with their respective communities, regions and organizations.

### **Parties that could be involved in supporting the development of a BC First Nations wholistic water declaration:**

According to the directions and guidance of First Nations in BC, a declaration could come from one or multiple Indigenous organizations or consulates that can help support and develop this work. Here is a list of some of the organizations that could be considered:

**BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN):** The BCAFN is a province-wide organization that can facilitate and support development by gathering BC First Nations interested in developing the first draft of a water declaration. They could also support further engagement work to ensure that First Nation community members in BC are informed and supportive of this proposal. BCAFN is also part of a collaborative political partnership amongst the three First Nations provincial organizations in BC (the BCAFN, First Nations Summit, and Union of BC Indian Chiefs). The FNLC seeks to coordinate approaches on shared mandates to advocate on behalf of First Nations in BC. The FNLC has several collective mandates to advance BC First Nations' rights, title, and interests in water and could help facilitate this work.

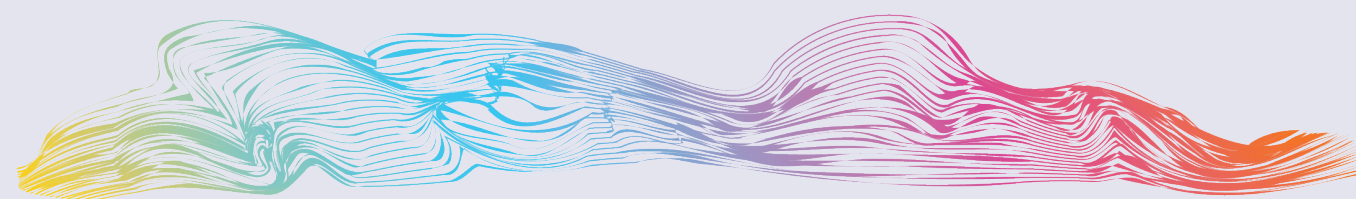
**First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC):** FNFC is a province-wide organization that can play a secretarial role in supporting the development of a cohesive BC First Nations Water Declaration and ensure it aligns and is coordinated with other province-wide initiatives. They could also reach out to water funders and water leaders.

Centre of Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER): The CIER is a nationwide not-for-profit organization that can also play a role in supporting the construction of a BC First Nations wholistic water declaration.

### Parties that can endorse a BC First Nations wholistic water declaration

For this declaration to have a further impact, the First Nations of BC could have the declaration affirmed, endorsed, or recognized not only by the First Nations of BC but by other parties, including Indigenous aggregate groups and Indigenous governments. The crown provincial government and specific ministries could also play a role in the resourcing of the declaration in addition to endorsing it. Lastly, water leaders, funders, stakeholders, and any other industry working on water management, stewardship, and protection could decide to endorse it. Having the crown government and other allies endorse and recognize the declaration could be a tool for further relationship-building with these different parties.

## Conclusion



In conclusion, this “policy ask” proposes that First Nations in BC develop a provincial wholistic water declaration. The ask presents some context regarding the duties and responsibilities First Nations in BC hold to water. It provides a basis for why this work is important for First Nations in BC to consider developing a provincial wholistic water declaration. While also examining the current jurisdictional and legal context that Nations face here, including challenges and opportunities. In addition, this

policy proposal gives insight as to how the First Nations in BC could develop a wholistic water declaration. It also details the structure of developing a declaration, whom it could involve, and what it could look like.

By doing so, the First Nations in BC are further along the path toward being united and recognized to actively exercise governance and jurisdiction of all water in their traditional territories.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy proposal takes place on the stolen territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səl ilwətaʔ (Tsilil-Waututh) peoples. This policy ask attempts to provide a tool that can create a united message and vision for the First Nations of British Columbia to uphold Indigenous sovereignty on unceded lands.

This policy ask was created to honour all Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island and the world. They continue to do the important work of protecting, respecting, and upholding their sacred relationships with water.

I am grateful for the 2022 Vancouver Foundation LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP) and all of the incredible mentors and participants involved who helped me reflect and think deeply about these issues. I'm particularly grateful to my mentors, Kris Statnyk and Susi Porter-Bopp, for giving me much-needed guidance and support through this process.





*Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations in BC, have a sacred responsibility to water and should be included in all decision-making around water.*

Vancouver Foundation is Community Inspired. We are a community foundation that connects the generosity of donors with the energy, ideas, and time of people in the community. Together, we've been making meaningful and lasting impacts in neighborhoods and communities since 1943. We work with individuals, corporations, and charitable agencies to create permanent endowment funds and then use the income to support thousands of charities. We recognize that communities are complex and that collaboration between multiple stakeholders is needed to help everyone thrive and evolve. Vancouver Foundation brings together donors, non-profits and charities, government, media and academic institutions, local leaders, and passionate individuals to build meaningful and lasting change in the province of British Columbia. We see young people, their voices and experiences as part of that vision to building meaningful change.

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