

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 31, 2023

New Relationship Trust

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and
Reconciliation

First Nations in B.C. Can Now Apply for the new Declaration Act Engagement Fund

VANCOUVER – The New Relationship Trust (NRT) is now accepting application online from First Nations in B.C. to a \$200 million fund to support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration).

Established in April 2023 by the Province of British Columbia, the Declaration Act Engagement Fund supports First Nations' capacity to engage on the implementation of the Declaration Act Action Plan and alignment of provincial laws with the UN Declaration, as required under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act).

"Across the provincial government, we are working in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples to implement the UN Declaration," says Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. "The Declaration Act Engagement Fund enables equitable participation by First Nations as we carry out this important work together. This enhanced participation also greatly benefits the Province through the skills, advice, and guidance each Nations brings."

The Province has partnered with NRT to administer the fund and design, launch and deliver the funding program on its behalf.

Each First Nation in B.C. will be eligible for \$260,000 annually for a total of \$1.04 million over four years through a single, streamlined application.

"NRT is pleased to partner with the Province to deliver an accessible and flexible funding process that empowers First Nations to conduct the work of implementing the UN Declaration on their own terms," says Walter Schneider, CEO of New Relationship Trust. "We recognize this project is an incremental step and that more work will need to be done to support First Nations through the process, but it is an important first step nonetheless."

Funding will be delivered over the next four years, through an Indigenous-led model founded on the understanding that each First Nation has their own distinct structure, cultural heritage, relationships, ways of knowing, and traditional and modern governance systems. Eligible costs include staffing, legal and technical support, professional fees, community engagements, travel costs and other resources costs related to the government-to-government Declaration Act implementation.

In designing the program, NRT has focused on reducing barriers and administrative burdens, and working alongside First Nations to support their unique journeys to engage, consult, and work with the provincial government on mutually shared priorities and strategies.

About the Declaration Act Engagement Fund

The primary purpose of the Declaration Act Engagement Fund is to support the implementation of the Declaration Act Action Plan and commitments to align provincial legislation with the UN Declaration, both of which must be undertaken in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples.

Additional objectives include:

- Providing quick and easy access to four-year funding that focuses on reducing typical application and reporting barriers.
- Providing funding to empower First Nations to more fully participate in government-to-government engagement and consultation with the Province of B.C. without having to subsidize the costs from their own government programs or own source revenues.
- Supporting and enhancing sustainable capacity development within First Nation communities to provide knowledge, advice, and guidance that assist the Province of B.C. in amending or developing laws to align with the UN Declaration.
- Supporting and informing activities to implement the Declaration Act Action Plan.

To apply for funding or find more information about the Declaration Act Engagement Fund, visit www.newrelationshiptrust.ca or email daef@nrtf.ca.

About New Relationship Trust

The NRT is an independent, Indigenous-led and politically neutral non-profit dedicated to empowering First Nations in B.C. in their unique journeys toward self-determination and nationhood.

Created as a result of the Transformative Change Accord Agreement signed in 2005 between the First Nation Leadership Council, the Province of B.C. and the Government of Canada, the NRT embodies a commitment to strengthen relationships on a government-to-government basis, and a recognition that transformative change would require Indigenous-led funding approaches.

In addition to its strategic partnerships with the provincial and federal government, the NRT serves as a catalyst for capacity development transformation across First Nations in British Columbia through its funding pillars in Nation building, economic development, education, and language and culture.

In 2006, the NRT was seeded with a \$100 million investment from the predecessor of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. Since then, NRT has flowed more than \$101 million dollars from this fund to First Nations to support them in building resilient and thriving communities on their own terms.

Thanks to prudent fiscal management, that initial capitalization has become a perpetual fund that will support First Nations into the future they choose to create for themselves.

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