



SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
December 2-3-4, 2025, Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 56/2025

TITLE: First Nations-led Critical Minerals Strategy

SUBJECT: Economic Development, Environment

MOVED BY: Chief Kelsey Jacko, Cold Lake First Nation, AB

SECONDED BY: Chief Jenny Brake, Qalipu First Nation, NL

DECISION: Carried; 7 opposed; 6 abstentions

WHEREAS:

A. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) states:

- i. Article 3: Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
- ii. Article 19: States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.
- iii. Article 20 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.
- iv. Article 26 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
- v. Article 26 (2): Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.
- vi. Article 32(1): Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands, territories and other resources.

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- vii. Article 32(2): States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent prior to 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.
 - viii. Article 32(3): States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact. This section provides the background information for the resolution.
- B. First Nations have the Inherent right and responsibility to steward and govern their lands, waters, and natural resources, including critical minerals, according to their laws, customs, and values.
 - C. The federal government of Canada has identified critical minerals as a key strategic sector in its 2022 Critical Minerals Strategy, prioritizing resource development to meet global demand for clean energy transition, defense, and high technology applications.
 - D. Despite being disproportionately impacted by extractive activities, First Nations continue to be excluded from key decision-making processes, revenue sharing, and benefit agreements related to critical mineral exploration, extraction, and processing.
 - E. The British Columbia (BC) First Nations Energy and Mining Council's Critical Minerals Strategy, developed through extensive engagement with over 250 First Nations leaders and technicians in BC, outlines 50 recommendations to ensure First Nations' leadership and benefit in critical mineral development, emphasizing environmental protection, socio-economic development, clean energy, and land rights.
 - F. There is an urgent need for a national, First Nations-led Critical Minerals Strategy that positions First Nations to lead and benefit from critical mineral development on their lands and waters through mechanisms such as equity ownership, environmental oversight, workforce development, and knowledge-sharing.
 - G. A national First Nations-led Critical Minerals Strategy will enhance First Nations' economic participation in the critical minerals value chain through mechanisms including equity ownership, revenue sharing, impact benefit agreements, Indigenous procurement policies, workforce training and certification programs, and the creation of First Nations-owned processing infrastructure.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to immediately develop a national First Nations Critical Minerals Strategy that is grounded in the principles of self-determination, free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), as based on our right to self-determination and environmental stewardship with guidance from First Nations, relevant Chiefs committees such as the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development (CCED) and the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE), and relevant technical experts.
2. Direct the AFN to seek funding for and establish a First Nations Critical Minerals Task Force comprised of regional First Nations leaders, technical experts, youth, and Elders to guide the development and

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implementation of the Strategy in a manner that includes regional knowledge, perspectives, and best practices, and to provide updates on the development of the Strategy to the First Nations-in-Assembly.

3. Call upon the federal government to fully recognize First Nations inherent jurisdiction and governance over their lands, waters, and resources, and to engage in co-development of any national policy or legislation related to critical minerals with First Nations rights- and title- holders.
4. Urge federal, provincial, and territorial governments to ensure that no critical mineral projects proceed without the FPIC of impacted First Nations, consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and existing case law.
5. Direct the AFN to seek funding from Natural Resources Canada, Infrastructure Canada, and other relevant federal departments to support First Nations capacity building in mineral governance, environmental monitoring, and clean technology innovation.

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