

Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

We recognise Indigenous rights and title in British Columbia. We will uphold Indigenous self-determination, address rights and title and support the customary roles and lives of Indigenous peoples.

HOW WE'RE THINKING ABOUT THIS

The rights of Indigenous peoples are inherent, existing and cannot be infringed upon. First Nations hold rights and title to the land because it was never legally surrendered or ceded—and historic treaties have not been honoured. Ignoring this reality is not only unjust but also creates uncertainty and leads to costly, protracted litigation for the province.

While economic reconciliation is essential, it is not enough. We must strive for full reconciliation, supporting Indigenous peoples as they heal from the damaging legacies of colonization. Reconciliation should inspire both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals to transform Canadian society, ensuring that future generations can live together in dignity, peace and prosperity on these shared lands.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Indigenous peoples continue to experience structural and systemic racism in British Columbia.

Indigenous peoples across British Columbia have been stripped of their land, languages and inherent right to self-determination. The residential school system, systemic racism in healthcare, education and employment—along with ongoing land loss—have resulted in lower life expectancies for Indigenous peoples, who face disproportionate rates of homelessness, substance use challenges, drug toxicity deaths, suicide, police violence and imprisonment.

Instead of supporting Indigenous governments and rights, successive governments have chosen to deny or delay rights, governance, and self-determination. The predominant pattern has been for governments to fight about every aspect of rights recognition, requiring Indigenous peoples to focus much of their limited time and resources towards endless fights against the Crown, instead of the vital nation and government-building work needed.

POLICIES FOR ANNOUNCEMENT

Recognize and empower Indigenous governments, ensuring equitable access to resources and decision-making authority.

- Recognize all Indigenous governments formed in alignment with the principles of Indigenous self-determination, removing limitations related to 'Indian Act' bands and those incorporated under provincial statutes.
- Provide Indigenous governments with stable and reliable funding, comparable to other levels of government, allowing them to carry out their duties and make long-term investment and planning decisions.

Affirm Indigenous language rights and provide the resources needed to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages.

- We will enact an Indigenous Languages Act, which affirms that Indigenous languages are a fundamental and valued part of British Columbia's heritage. This will guarantee Indigenous language rights and provide communities with the necessary funding and support for language preservation, revitalization, and strengthening.
- We will enable the use of all Indigenous languages on government-issued identification, ensuring that people can reclaim their names in their original language at no cost.

Ensure public servants are educated on the history, rights, and laws of Indigenous peoples.

- We will provide education to all public servants on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the legacy of residential schools, treaties, Indigenous law and Indigenous-Crown relations.

Align land legislation with Indigenous rights and ensure public participation in the process.

- We will review the Land Act to ensure its alignment with the inherent rights of First Nations peoples and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. This process will be conducted transparently, with opportunities for public consultation across British Columbia.

Ensure that provincial legislation and decision-making processes uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples.

- Enact an amendment to the Interpretation Act confirming that all provincial enactments must uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples, ensuring that no laws abrogate or derogate from those rights.

- Establish an expert advisory committee comprising specialists in Indigenous rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and constitutional law. This committee will advise both the Provincial Government and Indigenous governments on legislative developments—and their advice will be made public.
- We will co-develop with Indigenous peoples a clear policy that outlines how Indigenous peoples will be engaged consistently across government during the law-making process, including how the government will provide financial support for their participation.
- We will co-develop a mechanism with Indigenous peoples for resolving Indigenous-Crown disputes proactively, to foster understanding and avoid litigation.

