



Reconciliation in action

Indigenous peoples have lived with the impact and legacy of colonialism for decades. Their resilience in the face of genocide is why Indigenous people, language and culture survive. Canadians are reckoning with the theft of children from families and land from Indigenous communities. New Democrats believe that the time has come for a fundamentally different approach to Crown-Indigenous relations in Canada, one based on the recognition of the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and self-determination. At the heart of our vision of a better Canada is the need for concrete, specific actions that **advance Indigenous peoples and all Canadians down the path of reconciliation**. The time for good words and promises is over – we need to work to build a new nation-to-nation relationship now.

Successive federal governments have denied the basic human rights of Indigenous peoples, stolen children from their parents, forced Indigenous

peoples off their homelands and territories, and claimed lands without consent or compensation. We have witnessed governments spend millions of taxpayer dollars fighting Indigenous peoples in court over lands, trying to overturn human rights rulings to compensate Indigenous children for chronic underfunding of child welfare and health care services and litigating against residential schools Survivors seeking accountability and redress for past harms. Most recently, we have seen successive governments chronically underfund vital services like water and housing, and even child welfare services on reserve, all of which have resulted in the COVID-19 pandemic having a disproportionately high impact on Indigenous peoples.

New Democrats are committed to undertaking the important work of reconciliation in good faith, and in true and equal partnership with Indigenous communities across the country. We believe that the Crown's relationship to Indigenous peoples must be based on an acknowledgement of our country's **colonial history** of genocide and stolen lands – and include legally binding commitments to fair and equitable redress going forward.



Upholding Indigenous rights and advancing self-determination

New Democrats believe the federal government should not be able to pick and choose which Indigenous rights they will uphold, and which ones they will ignore. In line with recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which sets out minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples, is the framework for reconciliation.

In partnership with Indigenous peoples, a New Democrat government will **fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** and the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action**.

New Democrats will work with Indigenous peoples to co-develop a **National Action Plan for Reconciliation**, drawing directly from the Calls to Action and the Declaration to ensure that Canada's laws, policies, and practices are consistent with Canada's human rights commitments – including cultural rights, land rights, and rights to self-determination and self-government.

Through legislation, we will establish a **National Council for Reconciliation** to provide oversight and accountability for this process, reporting regularly to Parliament and Canadians.

A New Democrat government will replace mere consultation with a standard of **free, prior and informed consent** for Indigenous communities affected by government policies – including for all decisions affecting constitutionally protected land rights, like energy project reviews. We are committed to good-faith, consent-based engagement and negotiations consistent with the *Tsilhqot'in* decision, an approach that honours Canada's legal and constitutional obligations.

We will recognize and **respect treaties**, supporting Indigenous Nations who are building and re-building their governance structures.

We will also respect **Inuit self-determination** by co-developing the federal government's *Arctic Policy Framework* through shared governance within the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, including through the adoption of an Inuit Nunangat policy in full partnership with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. We will support the economic and social self-reliance of Inuit by addressing the massive infrastructure deficit in Northern communities, including housing, access to high-speed broadband, and airports, and ensuring that federal election ballots include Indigenous languages like Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun.

New Democrats recognize **Métis self-determination** and in government, we will respect the path forward established by the Métis National Council and its governing members. We will pursue government-to-government negotiations on issues including self-government, education, housing and health.

A New Democrat government will work in partnership with Indigenous communities across the country to help protect and revitalize the incredible diversity of **Indigenous languages** in Canada with new legislation and stable funding. In response to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 80, we will ensure there are funds to communities to commemorate a **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation** to acknowledge the painful legacy of colonization, honour the Survivors of residential schools, and help communities across Canada commit to meaningful reconciliation.





Justice and healing – addressing the harms of residential schools

A vital part of reconciliation is fully acknowledging the horror and harm caused to Indigenous children, their families and communities by the residential school system. These institutions systemically removed children from their families and inflicted abuse, sickness and death. The recent revelations of thousands of mass and unmarked graves at residential school sites across the country underlines the depth of horror that this genocidal policy inflicted for more than 160 years.

It's time to **find every child**, and bring them home.

A New Democrat government will fully fund the search for grave sites at former residential schools, as well as the maintenance, commemoration, reburial and protection of residential school cemeteries according to the wishes of Indigenous families, residential school Survivors and communities. We will also work with nations and Survivors to establish memorials to those lost to residential schools.

In order for there to be reconciliation, New Democrats recognize that there must also be **truth, accountability and justice**. We will ensure the appointment of a **special prosecutor** to pursue those who inflicted great harm on Indigenous children in Canada's residential school system. We will require that churches and governments **hand over any and all records** that could be helpful in identifying the children who lay buried in unmarked graves, or in finding individuals who were involved in their deaths.

Finally, recognizing the need for special supports to address the inter-generational impacts of colonialism and residential schools, a New Democrat government will support and fully fund **community-driven solutions for healing**, including projects similar to the former "Aboriginal Healing Foundation".

Investing in children and ending funding discrimination

Children deserve the very best start in life. Every single child in Canada should have the care and opportunities that they need to succeed and thrive – without exception.

But for generations, the Canadian government's treatment of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children has been a national disgrace and an unspeakable tragedy. While residential schools no longer operate, the intergenerational trauma caused by them is felt every day. And despite the apologies from political leaders, the reality is that systemic discrimination against Indigenous children continues today.

Indigenous children and young people have the right to culture, language and to be raised in their own communities – all of which are vital to overall well-being. By implementing the United Nations Declaration, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and supporting self-determination, New Democrats will make sure that all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, young people and families are treated with the justice, respect and care that they deserve.

New Democrats will take immediate action to respect, support and resource Indigenous jurisdiction over **child welfare systems**, and will back this commitment with long-term, predictable funding guaranteed in legislation so that Indigenous peoples can exercise their jurisdiction and authority over matters involving their own children and families.

We also commit to **ending discrimination** against Indigenous children, young people and families by fully implementing the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal orders which ordered the Canadian government to stop chronically underfunding child welfare services on reserve, and working with the *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society* to implement the *Spirit Bear Plan*. We will put an immediate end to government litigation against Indigenous children.

A New Democrat government will also fully implement **Jordan's Principle**, working with the provinces and territories to end the delays and ensure equitable access to health services and educational supports for Indigenous children from coast to coast to coast. We'll end the court challenge and ensure that Jordan's Principle applies to children off-reserve. And we will create a Spirit Bear Day to promote awareness of Jordan's Principle and of the challenges faced by First Nations children when accessing government services.



Safe, quality housing for all

New Democrats believe that everyone in Canada should be able to find a safe and affordable place to call home. And no one in this country should be forced to live in housing that makes them sick.

But, today, decades of colonialism perpetrated by the federal government has resulted in a devastating housing crisis for many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families. The Liberal government has failed to help people, leaving communities with long waiting lists for housing, and overcrowded, dilapidated homes. The mold crisis continues to harm people's health. And chronic overcrowding is hurting people in Indigenous communities across the country, including by creating the conditions for rapid transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Conservatives have an even worse record from their time in government: they announced a fund for 25,000 homes, yet six years later, fewer than 100 homes had been built.

It's time to end the housing crisis for good – with **safe and affordable housing** in every Indigenous community, on and off reserve.

New Democrats will address the Indigenous housing crisis and put an end to chronic overcrowding and long-wait lists by working with Indigenous communities to implement co-developed, fully funded **Indigenous National Housing Strategy** within our first 100 days in office. This innovative, ground-up strategy will mean sustainable and dedicated funding to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples, whether in urban, rural or remote communities.

We believe that the federal government must immediately step up to tackle the **mold crisis** affecting tens of thousands of homes, and provide support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples to ensure that their **homes are safe and healthy**. We will also ensure that Indigenous communities have the resources to make homes greener and more **energy efficient**, working to keep the benefits of good jobs, training and investment close to home.

Closing the education gap

Under the Liberal and Conservative governments, too many young people in Indigenous communities don't have access to a quality education. Successive governments have failed to provide core funding for on-reserve education, failed to adequately support Indigenous post-secondary students and failed to deliver a plan for how the government will bring all schools on reserve up to provincial standards – despite Parliament committing to this when they passed the *Shannen's Dream* motion in 2012.

In government, New Democrats will ensure that **every child** is provided a **safe place to learn** and an opportunity to succeed, whether on or off reserve. We will implement *Shannen's Dream* of equitable **access to education**, backed by federal investments and infrastructure, so no student will be forced to learn in dangerous environments, as we have witnessed in Kashechewan First Nation.

Recognizing that barriers to **post-secondary education** and training continue, we will support Indigenous youth and help them bridge the gap to post-secondary education through expanded financial assistance and increased educational opportunities for children who grew up in care, and distance education for rural and remote students.

And we believe that all Canadians should be aware of the contributions and history of Indigenous peoples and understand the legacy of residential schools. We will work with the provinces to establish **Indigenous history education programs** for all Canadians, based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 62 and 63 – and ensure that the development and implementation of these programs are led by Indigenous peoples.



Fostering thriving and resilient communities with clean water and strong public services

For communities to thrive, it takes strong public services that families can count on. It takes safe, reliable infrastructure, and opportunities for young people to build a good life.

But today, too many Indigenous communities across the country are still waiting for clean drinking water, basic emergency services, secure public transportation or help with environmental initiatives – sometimes with tragic consequences.

The Liberals promised to lift all **drinking water advisories** by 2021, and failed, even after the PBO warned them years ago that they were under-funding their promise by billions of dollars¹⁰. Now, the Liberals are telling Indigenous communities that they have to wait until 2026 for this clean water promise to be fulfilled. It's shameful, and we must do better.

New Democrats believe that it is past time for the federal government to step up and fully fund the services and infrastructure that Indigenous communities need to thrive – it is an important part of the responsibility that Canada owes to Indigenous peoples given the deep and intergenerational impacts of colonialism.

This means making the full investments required to ensure clean water and lift all drinking water advisories for good right now, not years from now, and supporting Indigenous-led water management training programs and water system operations as an immediate priority. And this means funding on-reserve emergency management and prevention, including **firefighting** training and equipment. It also means ensuring safe **public transportation**, by resuming and expanding rural and remote bus routes and passenger rail service.

Strong communities are sustainable communities, and many Indigenous communities have been at the forefront of the move towards renewable energy. We will work with them to protect infrastructure from **climate change** and increase the use of **renewable energy**. New Democrats will help expand community-owned renewable energy projects – and support efforts to transition remote communities away from polluting diesel and harmful fumes, towards reliable and clean energy alternatives.

¹⁰ Parliamentary Budget Officer. "Budget Sufficiency for First Nations Water and Wastewater Infrastructure," December 2017. Accessed online at: https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2017/FN%20Water/FN_Water_EN.pdf

Nurturing healthy communities

Health care is one of the basics that every family needs. No matter who you are or where you live, you need to know that you can count on quality medical help when you and your loved ones need it, particularly in a public health crisis like COVID-19.

But today, a shocking number of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities do not have access to reliable health care services. People cannot get the mental health care they need. Residents of remote communities are forced to live with just a few days per month of medical care. And the crumbling and out-dated infrastructure at many federal nursing stations is simply inadequate for the needs of the communities.

After four years in government, the Liberals have failed to invest adequately in Indigenous health care to fix the problems – Inadequate funds for suicide prevention in the North, for medical clinics, for universal pharmacare and for traditional ways of healing. Meanwhile, when they were in government, the Conservatives not only failed to invest in health care; they cut funding for Indigenous-led health initiatives.

New Democrats will make sure that the federal government steps up to **close the health gap** in Indigenous communities, and supports Indigenous health self-determination. We recognize that healing the ongoing trauma caused by colonialism and residential schools will require long-term partnership and reliable, ongoing funding.



Joyce's Principle will be the basis for a new approach to tackling systemic racism in health care under a New Democrat government. This principle is named for Joyce Echaquan, an Atikamekw woman who died tragically in hospital after suffering racist care. Joyce's Principle demands that all Indigenous people have an equal right to the highest standard of physical and mental health, with a right to access traditional medicines.

We will make sure that people can get the **treatment they need** in their community through investments in Indigenous health care infrastructure, medical supplies and diagnostic equipment. We will work in partnership with Indigenous communities to improve access to **mental health** and **addiction treatment** services both on and off reserve – including an evidence-based **action plan to prevent suicide**, backed by dedicated federal resources, fully implementing the New Democrat motion on suicide prevention passed by the House of Commons.

A New Democrat government will also work with communities and care providers to ensure that Indigenous-led, culturally appropriate home care and long-term care is available for **Elders**, in their home communities and languages.

We will support Indigenous **food sovereignty**, and reform the **Nutrition North** program to improve families' access to food, including country and traditional food. New Democrats will work with northerners to turn Nutrition North into a social program that benefits communities in the North directly, rather than simply subsidizing companies.

Finally, we will build a treatment centre for residents affected by long-term **mercury exposure** and compensate families affected by the inter-generational problem of mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows.

In every community, New Democrats are committed to delivering better access to health care. It's who we are.



Supporting Indigenous employment and economic development

For decades now, Indigenous peoples have been seeking a **new fiscal relationship** with the Crown that respects the existence of inherent title and rights. A new fiscal relationship means secure funding to support programs and services, and access to revenue streams to help close the socio-economic gap and support self-government.

Making sure that Indigenous communities thrive also means working in partnership with Indigenous peoples to expand economic opportunities and create good jobs in Indigenous communities all across the country. In the wake of the pandemic, it's essential that Indigenous communities have a seat at the table to co-develop and benefit from the government's economic recovery efforts.

We believe that the economic recovery from COVID-19 must further reconciliation and economic justice for Indigenous peoples. A New Democrat government will work with Indigenous communities to support locally-driven **economic development** and **create good jobs** through infrastructure and public service investments, and expanded access to broadband **internet and cell service** for rural and remote communities. We commit to working with **Indigenous entrepreneurs** to find solutions for accessing capital and scale up, investing in Indigenous social enterprise projects and entrepreneurship, and to ensure that the federal government prioritizes procurement from Indigenous companies where possible.

Smaller Indigenous communities left behind by the current funding model need **dedicated regional economic development support** to help expand economic opportunities in a way that reflects the community's social and cultural values.

A New Democrat government will also create a **Northern Infrastructure Fund** to fast-track investment and focus on improving much-needed infrastructure like roads and broadband internet for communities in the north.

Honouring Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people

Respect for Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people must be at the core of a new Crown-Indigenous relationship. But for too many Indigenous women systemic discrimination and violence continues to be a reality.

After the Conservatives refused to address the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women for almost a decade, the Liberal government finally launched a long-overdue inquiry – but then set it up with a limited mandate, and failed to adequately care for the families who courageously shared their stories. The Inquiry's finding of a genocide against Indigenous women in Canada demands action from all Canadians.

The report from the National Inquiry must not sit on a shelf. New Democrats will work in partnership with Indigenous women, the families of the missing and murdered, and communities to **implement the Inquiry's Calls for Justice** and the calls to action brought forward by communities. This includes establishing a comprehensive plan to **address violence against Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQI2S+ People** – ensuring that all those fleeing violence have access to culturally appropriate programming, emergency shelters and transitional housing.

We believe it's wrong that Indigenous women, and their children, still do not have **equal status rights** – including the right to pass on the ability to qualify for Indian status registration. Successive Conservative and Liberal governments have failed to fix this gross inequality. New Democrats will act to ensure full gender equality for First Nations status as a matter of priority, consistent with Canadian and international court rulings.

New Democrats acknowledge that respect for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people must be made real by ensuring equitable access and **self-determination** over land, culture, language, housing, child care, income security, employment, education, and physical, mental, sexual, and spiritual health.

Reconciliation and justice

Everyone should be able to count on the justice system to keep them safe and treat them fairly. But today, Indigenous peoples are disproportionately over-represented in Canada's prison system, and experience discrimination from police from coast to coast to coast. Tragically, many Indigenous people have experienced violence or even been killed by police: since 2017 an Indigenous person in Canada is more than 10 times more likely to have been shot and killed by a police officer in Canada than a white person¹¹.

This must end.

New Democrats believe government must work to **end systemic discrimination** against Indigenous peoples in the justice system. In accordance with Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 30, 31 and 32, we will remove most mandatory minimums, increase the discretion of judges during sentencing, ensure bail programs are culturally appropriate, bolster funding for community justice programs that focus on **healing and restorative justice** rather than incarceration, and uphold the use of Gladue principles in court proceedings.

We will work with Indigenous communities to enhance community safety and develop a **First Nations justice and policing strategy**. We will make First Nations Policing an essential service with long term, sufficient and equitable funding, while taking steps to end discriminatory policing practices like carding. New Democrats also believe that Inuit should have control over policing in their own communities, and we will allow the Inuit to independently oversee policing in Nunavut. We will also work with the Inuit to develop a long-term strategy for recruiting and retaining Inuit and Inuktitut speakers to work in community safety roles.

A New Democrat government will uphold and strengthen the *Directive on Civil Litigation Involving Indigenous Peoples* that puts an end to costly and adversarial legal battles with Indigenous communities. We will also keep **residential school Survivors** at the heart of decisions around justice for their experiences, ensuring fair compensation for St. Anne's residential school Survivors, Métis Survivors, and those who survived abuse in day schools.

¹¹ CTV News. "Why are Indigenous people in Canada so much more likely to be shot by police?" June 2020. Available online at: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/why-are-indigenous-people-in-canada-so-much-more-likely-to-be-shot-and-killed-by-police-1.4989864>

Protecting the environment together

The climate crisis is not just an environmental emergency – it also threatens traditional food sources and the very survival of many Indigenous communities. We must move past the delays and inaction of past Liberal and Conservative governments and take a fundamentally different approach to our future – one that recognize a holistic definition of sustainability.

New Democrats will put reconciliation at the core of this effort, upholding **Indigenous knowledge** and respecting inherent sovereignty. We recognize that as original peoples of this country, Indigenous peoples have intimate connections to their homelands, territories and resources and have provided stewardship since time out of memory. Indigenous peoples are best placed to protect **cultural and biological diversity** through control over their territory – and so the recognition of inherent rights, title and treaty rights will be at the heart of our approach to addressing climate change. We will support the creation and expansion of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in all areas of the country.

To make full and equal partnership the basis of Canada's efforts, New Democrats will ensure that First Nations, Inuit and the Métis leadership have a seat at **high-level decision-making** tables to help direct climate change efforts in Canada.

We will also expand the **Indigenous Guardians Program**, invest in Indigenous-led science and support the creation of Indigenous-managed protected areas – and make sure that species recovery efforts respect Indigenous rights and embrace traditional knowledge to increase biodiversity. This includes working hand-in-hand to advance the protection and restoration of wild Pacific salmon populations on the west coast.

Indigenous communities are not only stewards of their territories – they are also on the front lines dealing with the **impacts of climate change** every day. New Democrat government will work jointly with Indigenous leadership and communities to develop coordinated action plans to respond to climate change **emergencies like wildfires and floods**. This work will be informed by Indigenous traditional and ecological knowledge and legal systems, and include improving existing infrastructure, developing new infrastructure and supporting response efforts to keep people safe.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples need to be partners in the development of **job creation**, employment training and infrastructure investments that flow from federal efforts to address climate change, ensuring that they are implemented in ways that fit the needs and priorities of local communities.