

*The BC Greens recognize the inherent, existing, and inextinguishable rights of Indigenous peoples. We uphold Indigenous self-determination, address rights and title, and support the customary roles and lives of Indigenous peoples.*

First Nations peoples have lived on and stewarded the lands of British Columbia since time immemorial. Indigenous people and nations contribute enormously to British Columbia, but the decades of federal and provincial Crown policy that created the residential school system, systemic racism in healthcare, education and employment, dispossession and displacement from lands and territory, have resulted in a socioeconomic crisis in First Nations communities that is marked by lower life expectancies for Indigenous peoples, who face disproportionate rates of homelessness, substance use challenges, drug toxicity deaths, suicide, police violence and imprisonment. The work ahead of us is to reverse these statistics, and through public policy, create the conditions for the flourishing of all Indigenous peoples and nations in British Columbia.

Recent Court cases have laid bare the historic reality of illegal land dispossession. First Nations access to enough land to support their communities has, both historically and contemporaneously, been weaponised by bad-faith actors, further increasing the racism experienced by Indigenous people. First Nations in British Columbia 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 creates uncertainty and leads to costly and protracted litigation for the province. The modern treaty process, and other constructive agreements, are important tools for the provincial government to maintain the honour of the Crown and provide the opportunity to resolve outstanding land claims - with appropriate improvements to process and determination of overlapping land claims.

Nations shouldn't have to choose between poverty and a pipeline. Governments have a duty to support genuine economic reconciliation that enables nations to plan and determine their own economic future.

Economic reconciliation is essential, but it is not enough. We must strive for full reconciliation, supporting Indigenous peoples as they heal from the damaging legacies of colonization. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act provides a framework for reconciliation, setting out the work that the Government must do to set the stage for this future. Free, prior and informed consent is crucial, especially in a time of fast tracking and trade wars. Indigenous leaders have been clear that "economic urgency does not override our inherent and constitutionally protected First Nations title and rights, nor does it diminish the Crown's obligation to consult and cooperate in good faith with First Nations in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before approving or advancing projects affecting our lands,

territories or resources”<sup>1</sup>, and made clear the protections for Indigenous women, girls, and 2-spirited people that must be centered in any discussion on extractive industry.

The BC Greens will:

- Remove uncertainty and opacity that currently exists by implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act through legislation.
- Support and improve the Modern Treaties process and expand the opportunities for other constructive agreements.
- 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.
- Work with the federal government to ensure Indigenous governments have access to stable and reliable revenue, comparable to other levels of government, allowing them to carry out their responsibilities to their constituency and make long-term planning decisions and capital investments to overcome their infrastructure deficit.
- 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.
- Enable the use of all Indigenous languages on government-issued identification, ensuring that people can reclaim their names.
- Provide education to all MLAs and public servants on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the legacy of residential schools, treaties, Indigenous law and Indigenous-Crown relations.
- Ensure the whole Legislative assembly is responsible for stewarding the Crown-Indigenous relationship by re-establishing and renaming the Legislative Assembly’s Aboriginal Affairs Standing Committee.
- Establish an expert advisory committee comprising specialists in Indigenous rights, DRIPA, and constitutional law. This committee will advise both the Legislative Assembly, through the Aboriginal Affairs Standing Committee, and Indigenous governments on legislative developments. Their advice will be made public.
- Co-develop a mechanism with Indigenous peoples for resolving Indigenous-Crown disputes proactively, to foster understanding and avoid litigation.
- Create a taskforce to investigate and prosecute cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, children and two-Spirited people. This taskforce will operate under civilian oversight from Indigenous communities, with a strong focus on women’s leadership, and follow the guidance of the *Red Women Rising* report.
- Call on David Eby to issue a formal apology to the Cowichan and Gitxaala for mishandling his government’s approach to DRIPA.
- Fund public education on DRIPA to combat misinformation.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/ubcic\\_womens\\_declaration\\_protecting\\_our\\_women\\_and\\_our\\_lands](https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/ubcic_womens_declaration_protecting_our_women_and_our_lands)