



Aboriginal Peoples' Commission | Commission des peuples autochtones

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**SUMMARY OF POLICIES OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA
WITH RESPECT TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1. Education
2. Housing
3. Health
4. Missing/Murdered Aboriginal Women
5. Economic opportunities
6. Indian Act
7. Land Claims
8. Kelowna Accord – Strengthening Relationships and Moving Forward

1. Education

ISSUE

Educational attainment is a key determinant of social and economic well being, yet the level of educational attainment amongst Aboriginal (i.e., First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) peoples remains well below that of the non-Aboriginal population in Canada.

POSITION

The federal government has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that Aboriginal peoples have the same opportunity to learn and succeed as other Canadians. Many indirect factors, such as poor housing conditions and overcrowding, poverty, violence in the home may affect educational success.

As per the principles set out by First Ministers and Aboriginal leaders in what became known as the Kelowna Accord (2005), the Liberal Party of Canada's goal is to close the gap between Aboriginal learners and other Canadians in terms of K-12 educational attainment.

POLICY

- Enhance the educational environment for learners through agreed to initiatives;
- Develop more effective working relationships between the public education systems and First Nations schools on reserve or pursuant to self-government and sectoral agreements;
- Develop flexible arrangements that respect different regional and local circumstances;
- Lift the 2% cap on financial support for Aboriginal education;
- Increase funding for Aboriginal K-12 education by \$300 million in the second year of a Liberal mandate;
- Address the needs of Aboriginal women;
- Measure and track the progress towards closing the gap in terms of increase in number of secondary school graduates.

In addition, the Liberal Party of Canada advocates eventual linking and enhancement of programs and services all along the continuum of life long learning, especially early learning and childcare, and post-secondary education. To this end, Liberal Party of Canada policy is as follows:

- Immediately increase funding to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program by \$200 million over two years;

- Work with the Métis community to establish a new national Métis scholarship program to help Métis learners across the country to access post-secondary education;
- operations of First Nations University.

Public Education Systems

To improve the educational outcomes of all Aboriginal learners attending public schools, while respecting provincial/territorial jurisdiction in education, a Liberal Government will:

- Support learners and their parents/families (i.e., family involvement with schools, adult literacy programming) as learners move through public education;
- Encourage learners to complete Grade 12 or equivalent, including establishing targets;
- Collaborate to facilitate transitions of First Nations learners who move to and from First Nations schools;
- Early detection of learning disabilities and assisting learners in overcoming difficulties and disabilities;
- Curriculum development that reflects local Aboriginal history, cultures, traditions, languages and learning approaches, where applicable;
- Increase the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers, as well as promoting cultural awareness among Aboriginal teachers;
- Increase Canadian society's awareness of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis through curriculum development that reflects Aboriginal history, cultures and traditions;
- A stronger Aboriginal voice and involvement, where appropriate, within educational structures;
- Strengthen relationships and linkages between public school systems and First Nation educational systems, including sharing of knowledge and expertise;
- Gathering the data to inform research and policy decisions, performance measurement and reporting.

First Nations-specific approach to education

Work with First Nations peoples and other levels of government to:

- Implement first Nations jurisdiction and control over education on-reserve or in self-governing First Nations, with collaboration, through negotiation, of provincial/territorial governments;
- Develop first Nations regional and sub-regional K-12 education systems and supporting First Nations school governing bodies (outside public education systems);

- Support high quality environments for First Nations learners on reserve, and those attending schools established pursuant to self-government and sectoral agreements, through investments in facilities and innovations in curricula and teachers/administrators;
- Develop and support First Nations/provincial/territorial/federal protocols or arrangements to work together to improve educational outcomes for First Nations learners;
- Support the development and implementation of First Nations school systems performance management, assessment and reporting mechanisms;
- Work together with provinces and territories to better support all First Nations learners moving between First Nations schools and public education systems, including:
 - Reciprocal tuition arrangements;
 - Effective interface between First Nations and provincial/territorial teacher certification, and certification of teachers in First Nations language and cultures;
 - Recognition of graduation requirements;
 - Exchange of appropriate student information;
 - Data sharing;
 - Professional development;
 - Reciprocal sharing of knowledge and expertise.

Inuit-specific approach to education

Work with Inuit peoples and other levels of government to enhance and/or develop Inuit-specific approach to education within public education systems to improve Inuit educational outcomes by:

- Developing Inuit-specific curriculum;
- Promoting, preserving, protecting Inuit languages;
- Training Inuit teachers, curriculum developers, administrators
- Exploring, within a year of our mandate, the establishment of a National Inuit Education Resource and Research Centre.

Métis-specific approach to education

Work with Métis peoples and other levels of government to:

- Develop and support initiatives to improve Métis educational outcomes within public education systems through K-12 innovation supports (e.g., stay in school programs, literacy initiatives, mentoring and role model programs, in-school cultural programs, etc.) that are developed and/or delivered in collaboration with Métis, and all relevant levels of government;

- Explore, within one year of mandate, the development of a Métis Nation Centre of Excellence in Education and Innovation through collaborative efforts between the Métis peoples and all relevant levels of government, as educational materials and resources, as well as undertaking research. In addition, where relevant provinces/territories agree, they will work with other Métis groups to develop appropriate educational partnerships;
- Enhance programs and services related to K-12 and transitions delivered by existing Métis educational institutions such as the Gabriel Dumont Institute (Saskatchewan) and Louis Riel Institute (Manitoba) and, where there is agreement, exploring options for the development of new Métis educational institutions.

2. Housing

ISSUE

Affordable, stable and good quality housing is essential to ensuring positive outcomes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and their communities, yet Aboriginal people experience sub-standard housing compared with the non-Aboriginal population.

POSITION

In accordance with the principles set out in the Kelowna Accord, the Liberal Party of Canada's goal is to close the gap that exists between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians in housing conditions and housing opportunities, in a manner that strengthens self-reliance.

POLICY

- Re-think current approaches to Aboriginal housing policy, service and supports by working with provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal partners to establish a renewed Affordable Housing Framework. The new Framework will include a focus on the particular needs of Aboriginal peoples, including reducing homelessness, maintaining and renewing the existing affordable housing stock in good condition and addressing urgent needs as well as long-term sustainable solutions, and stimulating new construction of affordable housing;
- Operationalize this framework with \$600 million in new funding over two years;
- Involve Aboriginal peoples in the determination of their own housing solutions;
- Allow for flexible approaches to address regional, community and individual circumstances;
- Address the needs of Aboriginal women.

Housing Partnerships

In addition, the Liberal Party of Canada is committed to working collaboratively with provinces and territories, with the support of Aboriginal housing providers, to improve housing opportunities in the off reserve or non reserve context, or pursuant to self-government agreements, and to enhance and build housing partnerships by:

- Supporting new housing initiatives, building on best practice, that span the housing continuum, including emergency shelters, transitional and affordable housing, social/subsidized housing, home ownership, and the repair and maintenance of existing housing stock;

- Examining their respective government policies and regulations that may impede housing development in support of greater self-reliance, such as market and community-based approaches;
- Supporting housing assistance on the basis of need;
- Supporting housing solutions for Aboriginal women in transition and single parents by increasing operating and program supports;
- Sharing housing expertise to support capacity development in areas like community planning, project development, portfolio administration and management;
- Increasing opportunities for skills training, apprenticeships, employment and business development in housing related areas.

In addition, the Liberal Party of Canada is committed to making investments in the off/non-reserve context, recognizing the responsibility of provinces and territories in the area of housing. Innovative Aboriginal housing agreements among the federal, provincial and territorial governments, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and Aboriginal housing providers, with flexible funding arrangements, will be developed through regional-based discussions, recognizing differing circumstances and existing relationships.

First Nations-specific approaches to housing

A Liberal Government of Canada will work collaboratively with First Nations and relevant provinces and territories to address housing challenges by:

- Developing a series of new initiatives that focuses on enhancing and supporting First Nations control over housing on reserve and pursuant to self-government and sectoral agreements. These initiatives will develop new approaches in First Nations housing, including the development of new institutional arrangements;
- Developing practical means and tools required to fundamentally change the delivery of housing over time on reserve and pursuant to self-government and sectoral agreements. Changes will include support for increased market-based housing, including the ability to lever funds in financial markets, capacity development, increased investments in housing-related training (e.g., training and apprenticeships in construction and skilled trades) and infrastructure and ensuring housing investments are focused on areas of greatest need. The needs of First Nations women will be addressed, including housing issues arising from marital or relationship breakdown;
- Exploring new options to support greater community access to land and improved land management capacity. Alternative financing instruments and new relationships with First Nation –controlled financial institutions will also be developed. Economic opportunities that flow from these initiatives (e.g., home construction and maintenance) must be managed in

a manner that maximizes the direct benefits to First Nations communities;

- Supporting social/subsidized housing requirements. Assistance to address immediate housing shortages and overcrowding will be provided on the basis of need.
- Where there is agreement, new housing partnerships will be created with regard to First Nations living off reserve.

A Liberal government will accept responsibility for assisting First Nations with respect to necessary potable water infrastructure on reserve. Canada will jointly work with First Nations to develop the necessary infrastructure required for an effective housing strategy on reserve. This means accelerating activities to ensure the safety of water supplies within established water and wastewater standards, as well as continued improvements in other basic infrastructure including roads and fire protection. Particular attention will be given to developing and implementing, with First Nations, a regime for the testing and regulation of water in First Nations communities. Collaboration with provinces and relevant territories will be obtained through agreements. Indicators to measure progress on these critical elements related to improving housing conditions on reserve will be developed jointly by First Nations and a Liberal Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments.

Inuit-specific approaches to housing

A Liberal Government of Canada will work collaboratively with Inuit and relevant provinces and territories to address housing challenges by:

- Providing immediate housing relief, focusing on new construction and innovation;
- Addressing housing shortages and overcrowding in the near-term by providing primary/subsidized housing;
- Developing an Inuit housing approach to offer appropriate, affordable, suitable housing. Enter into partnership agreements with relevant Inuit organizations and provinces/territories to create an Inuit Housing Institute to enhance building capacity in Inuit communities, sharing of best practices and information exchange regarding improvement of housing conditions for Inuit regions. Funding for the Institute will be in addition to any funding provided for construction, repair and maintenance of Inuit housing;
- Move forward from an assisted housing approach to a market approach to housing and self-reliance in Inuit regions by creating capacity for construction and maintenance at the community level;
- Multilaterally, link investments in housing to economic development and skills development. Use multi-year housing investments to create economic development initiatives, increasing Inuit employment, training

more Inuit in the construction trades, and assembling and constructing housing in the community by the community.

Specific-specific approaches to housing

A Liberal Government of Canada will work collaboratively with Métis and other levels of government to address housing challenges by:

- Making strategic and immediate investments in new Métis housing and in the ongoing maintenance of existing Delivered-delivered housing with a view to improving Métis delivery and control of, as well as access to, affordable and social/subsidized housing;
- Enhancing existing housing relationships and, where there is agreement, creating new ones, through Métis housing partnership agreements, with flexible funding arrangements, between Métis, the Government of Canada and relevant provinces and territories;
- Developing a Métis housing approach, which offers housing that is sustainable, appropriate and affordable for Métis. To this end, within 12 months, a Liberal federal government would work with representatives of the Métis and relevant provinces and territories with a view to developing a regionally focused Métis Nation Housing Institute. The Institute would work toward supporting new Métis social/subsidized housing and increased Métis control over housing in rural, urban, and northern environments; capacity development for Métis housing agencies/providers and assist in the creation of new ones where appropriate; policy development and analysis in support of Métis housing; research and data collection; and developing funding and investment models to support Métis housing.

3. Health

ISSUE

Improving the health issues of Aboriginal peoples is essential to improving their overall quality of life. Although progress has been made, current strategies have not succeeded in closing the gap in health status between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

POSITION

The Liberal Party of Canada's goal is to close the gap in health status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, recognizing that the achievement of long term goals requires long term funding commitments.

Prior to the Kelowna Accord, the Liberal Government of Canada developed the Blueprint on Aboriginal Health. The Blueprint was a ten-year transformative plan intended to, without unnecessary duplication and creation of parallel healthcare systems, lead to concrete initiatives to:

- Improve delivery and access to health services;
- Ensure that Aboriginal peoples benefit fully from improvements to Canadian health systems;
- Put in place health promotion and disease prevention measures as well as programs that will address other determinants of health (e.g., housing, education).

POLICY

Implementation of the Blueprint will occur both through federal initiatives as well as through the development of plans at the level of each province and territory through tripartite negotiated agreements that respect constitutional roles and responsibilities of governments. These initiatives and plans will be developed by parties working together and will identify priorities for action and investment. The Liberal Party of Canada recognizes that these initiatives and plans require partnerships and sustained federal investments both on and off reserve and in the North including in Inuit regions. These investments will build on the \$700 million committed at the September 13, 2004 Special Meeting of First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders. Taking a holistic and distinctions-based approach, these initiatives and plans could notably focus on such areas as:

- Mental health, suicide, and addictions;
- Nutrition and food security;
- Diabetes prevention and treatment;
- Public health;

- Continuing care;
- Telehealth;
- Maternal, child, and youth health.

As agreed within the Kelowna Accord, First Ministers and Aboriginal Leaders would support Ministers of Health and Aboriginal Affairs Ministers continuing to work collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples, regardless of where they live, to turn their commitments into concrete action at the regional and national levels.

Further, First Ministers and Aboriginal Leaders would measure progress in closing the gap, as assessed by key indicators. Partners would work to strengthen the capacity to assess progress and refine health indicators.

4. Missing / Murdered Aboriginal Women

ISSUE

The Native Women's Association of Canada's *Sisters in Spirit* research, education, and policy initiative has documented that there have been nearly 600 reported cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada as of 2009, with heavy concentration of those cases originating in western Canada. Of those women, more than half were under the age of 30, and 115 of them are still missing. This group has been stripped of its funding under the present Conservative Government of Canada.

POSITION

The staggering number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada is unacceptable. Canada must try to answer the questions of why and how these Canadian women have been murdered or gone missing so that we can reverse this disturbing trend.

POLICY

A Liberal government would mandate a national task force to examine the systemic causes of this problem, with and emphasis on preventing its continuation in the future. It will build on the work of provinces and Aboriginal women, and report to the Minister of Justice with an analysis and recommendations.

5. Economic Opportunities

ISSUE

Economic opportunities encompass activities both within First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities as well as Aboriginal involvement in broader regional, national, and international activities. It includes opportunities for wealth creation among both individuals and communities, including opportunities arising from the implementation of Aboriginal and treaty rights and land claims agreements. It is a process of engagement whereby Aboriginal individuals and communities both contribute to and fully benefit from Canada's economic growth and prosperity. Critical to increasing economic opportunities is developing and maintaining the social and economic factors that support balanced growth and promote healthy and skilled individuals and communities with the capacity to create wealth and participate fully in the economy. This recognizes the impact and importance of economic opportunities within health, housing, and education sectors.

POSITION

As per the Kelowna Accord, the Liberal Party of Canada commits to seizing opportunities for early actions. Regionally based strategic frames that can address economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples within the circumstances of each of the diverse regions of Canada will assist in achieving policy goals.

POLICY

As per the Kelowna Accord, the Liberal Party of Canada will:

- Address key components of economic opportunities for all Aboriginal peoples in areas such as economic infrastructure, training and skills development, connectivity, improving the regulatory environment, resource development, and business development;
- Facilitate effective economic opportunity partnerships and relationships among all parties (i.e., federal/provincial/territorial governments, Aboriginal communities and institutions, and the private sector).
- With Aboriginal Leaders, initiate regional distinctions-based processes, which are inclusive of all Aboriginal peoples, as well as with federal-provincial-territorial governments and private sector representatives to identify economic opportunity strategies.
- Based on regional discussions, Economic Development/Industry and Aboriginal Affairs Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders will develop regionally based strategic frames to facilitate economic opportunities and partnerships and report through the multilateral process(es) to First Ministers.

6. Indian Act

ISSUE

The *Indian Act*, which governs the day-to-day life for most Aboriginal people living on reserves, does not meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples. As per the principles set out in the Kelowna Accord, the Liberal Party of Canada recognizes the importance to First Nations of self-government in achieving political, social, economic, and cultural development and improved quality of life.

POSITION

Canada must work in partnership with First Nations people to move beyond the *Indian Act*, and establish modern, effective, and efficient relationships between the federal government and First Nations. Liberals believe it is important to move beyond the legacy of the *Indian Act*, while at the same time ensuring that existing Aboriginal relationships, treaties, and agreements with the Crown are not compromised, which could negatively affect the lives of Aboriginal peoples.

POLICY

- Work in partnership with First Nations people on a plan to establish new, modern, effective, and efficient relationships between the federal government and First Nations;
- To this end, as a first step in this relationship, a Liberal government will work with First Nations to establish First Nations Auditor General Office, which will help ensure better accountability between First Nations governments and the Crown.

7. Land Claims

ISSUE

The process of settling First Nations specific land claims is needlessly slow and burdensome to First Nations seeking fair settlements to outstanding grievances.

POSITION

Canada must pursue speedy, good faith resolution of specific and comprehensive First Nations claims to provide a clear, certain and long-lasting definition of rights to lands and resources for all Canadians.

POLICY

- The Liberal Party of Canada is committed to resolving outstanding land claims, and an unwavering commitment to ensuring that the right to self-determination and self-government means something real and tangible for First Nations across Canada;
- A Liberal Government of Canada would work with First Nations to reach speedy, good faith resolutions of specific and comprehensive land claims.

8. Kelowna Accord – Strengthening Relationships Moving Forward

ISSUE

In 2005, First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders under the Liberal government of Prime Minister Paul Martin produced a landmark agreement that has come to be known as the Kelowna Accord. A ten-year commitment was established to close the gap in the quality of life that now exists between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. The Kelowna Accord represented the first step in this ten-year dedicated effort. All agreed to take immediate action to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples in four key areas: health, education, housing, and relationships; enhancing economic relationships was also agreed upon as a key priority area for multilateral action. Measuring progress is critical to closing the gap. Broad indicators were identified, with more specific measures and targets to be developed going forward at regional and sub-regional levels.

Since cancellation of the Kelowna Accord by the Conservative government, there has been little progress made by the government to work collaboratively to improve the standard of living and quality of life for Aboriginal people.

POSITION

Canada must renew the spirit, intent, and framework of the Kelowna Accord to help develop strategies for improving the standard of living and quality of life for Aboriginal people. Particularly important are following principles of the Accord:

- Adopting a distinctions-based approach;
- Addressing differing circumstances of Aboriginal peoples and communities regardless of place of residence (on reserves or settlements, in rural or urban areas, or northern and Arctic regions) or legal status under the *Indian Act*;
- Working collaboratively with Aboriginal women to address their needs through their participation in the development of culturally-relevant policies and programs;
- Working collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples in an inclusive manner regarding policy and program development as well as, where appropriate, engaging Aboriginal service delivery organizations;
- Respecting existing bilateral, tripartite, and multilateral agreements and processes;
- Respecting regional differences;
- Being accountable and reporting regularly to respective constituencies on achieving progress.

Aboriginal peoples need the capacity to more effectively participate and contribute to the development of policies, programs and services that

affect them. The Liberal Party of Canada is committed to strengthening relationships between Aboriginal peoples and federal, provincial, and territorial governments. These relationships will be based on enhanced collaboration, effective working partnerships, and mutual respect.

POLICY - Strengthening Relationships and Moving Forward*

(*Policy from the Kelowna Accord regarding Health, Education, Housing, and Economic Opportunities has been merged with policy collected from other documents and can be found herein under those specific sub-headings.)

As per the Kelowna Accord, First Ministers and Aboriginal Leaders will work together at the regional level. Implementation of commitments will focus on developing practical approaches through existing tripartite or bilateral processes, or new process where necessary. These regional processes will respect the distinctions among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and will also be inclusive of all Aboriginal peoples. Regional circumstances will be taken into account.

First Nations

- In accordance with the terms of the Kelowna Accord, a Liberal government will be committed to the joint implementation of a bilateral implementation plan to strengthen relationships moving forward. At the national level, a First Nations Multilateral forum will be established to facilitate discussions with the Government of Canada and all provincial and territorial governments except Nunavut on First Nations-specific issues:
 - The Forum will be convened annually at the Ministerial level to coordinate efforts and monitor progress;
 - The Forum will be composed of ministers of Aboriginal Affairs, First Nations leaders and sectoral ministers as appropriate and agreed to by First Nations and federal, provincial and territorial governments;
 - The Forum will advise regional multilateral processes, create linkages across sectors and guide and monitor the implementation of national commitments, as appropriate;
 - The Forum will also report to future First Ministers Meetings;
 - Reporting will be based on a set of preliminary national indicators which could include: life expectancy, infant mortality, childhood obesity and premature mortality; educational attainment, linked to language acquisition, and employment; housing affordability, sustainability, and water quality.

Inuit

The rights of Inuit as an Aboriginal people of Canada are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. In addition, the federal commitments made in the Kelowna Accord must be developed in a manner consistent with the Inuit Partnership Accord, signed in May 2005, including any present or future commitments as a result of the Government of Canada – Inuit Action Plan. These commitments should not be interpreted or implemented so as to infringe on any rights of Inuit under the Land Claims Agreements.

- Inuit-specific strategies must be adopted to accommodate the unique conditions of arctic environments, the distinctive features of Inuit culture, as well as the needs of Inuit who reside outside land claims areas;
- A Liberal federal government would work together with relevant provinces and territories and Inuit to strengthen relationships, building on existing regional and bilateral agreements, such as the Canada/Inuit Partnership Accord and the Nunavut/Inuit “Working Together”. This means enhancing, with agreement of the parties, processes and arrangements to achieve positive social and economic outcomes for Inuit. The parties will determine priority issues and action through discussion and joint agreement;
- An Inuit Multilateral Forum will be established, linked to the annual meeting of Aboriginal Affairs Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders, to facilitate discussions with the federal government and the governments of Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories and Nunavut on Inuit-specific issues. This forum will advise and support regional Inuit processes, assess progress made on First Ministers Meeting commitments to Inuit, create linkages across sectors and report to future First Ministers Meetings;

Métis

Métis rights are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Closing the gap in the quality of life between Métis people and other Canadians will involve strengthening relationships between the federal government of Canada, relevant provincial/ territorial governments, Métis groups and organizations and, where recognized, Métis governments. To this end, a Liberal government would commit to:

- Building upon existing bilateral agreements, such as the Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement;
- Establishing a Métis Nation Multilateral Forum to facilitate discussions between Métis people, the Government of Canada, and relevant provincial and territorial governments. This forum will advise and support regional Métis processes, assess progress made on First Ministers

Meeting commitments to Métis, create linkages across sectors and report to future First Ministers Meetings;

- Collaboratively renew regional Métis tripartite processes to better reflect evolving relationships between Métis, the Government of Canada, and relevant provincial / territorial governments based on commitments flowing from First Ministers Meetings as well as emerging issues;
- Explore options with Métis to support and enhance ongoing work in relation to the establishment and maintenance of objectively verifiable Métis identification systems;
- Consistency with existing Federal-federal bilateral agreements in the implementation of any new bilateral agreements flowing from First Nations Meetings.