

Jack Layton

AND THE NEW DEMOCRATS

Leadership that moves us forward.

Standing up for First Nations,
Inuit and Métis People

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM JACK LAYTON

I am pleased to present you with a copy of the NDP Aboriginal Peoples Platform. This election platform directly addresses the relationship between the government of Canada and First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, their communities and their governments.

Our platform recognizes that we must work together with you to close the gap created by years of funding inequality. This means implementing the commitments of the Kelowna Accord and ensuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities have infrastructure, sustainable housing, water and other services equal to those enjoyed by other people in Canada.

Our Platform is comprehensive. It deals with skills shortages and training so that Aboriginal People can participate fully in the future economy. It also acknowledges the inherent right to self-government and provides mechanisms to deal with outstanding land claims that have been ignored for too long.

Today, as always, New Democrats are showing leadership on First Nations issues. In 2005, our party rewrote the Liberal budget, cancelling billions in corporate tax giveaways, and dedicating funds for Aboriginal housing and education. In the last session, we successfully passed a motion enshrining

“Jordan’s Principle” ensuring access to medical care and other essential services for children. And we passed a motion to have Parliament endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People – after the Prime Minister refused to sign on Canada’s behalf.

New Democrats believe in honouring our obligations. Together we can ensure justice for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

To view our entire election platform, visit our website at www.ndp.ca.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Layton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Jack Layton,

Leader, Canada’s New Democrats



JUSTICE FOR FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES

We Must End the Racism and Discrimination

It is time to build a new relationship between Canada's government and Aboriginal peoples. We must build a relationship based on honour and respect, not racism and neglect.

Canada took a step forward with the June 11 apology to residential school survivors.

The apology was very significant. Canada finally acknowledged that it was racist and wrong to take children from their families and homes, leave them vulnerable to abuse, and try to kill Aboriginal cultures and languages. We praise Mr. Harper for making the apology.

Now we must look ahead. Recognizing one of the most hurtful wrongs of the past is not an excuse for ignoring the wrongs of the present, nor for scrapping the Kelowna Accord.

There is much to be done. We must respect the place of Aboriginal peoples within Canadian society, right past wrongs, and build a hopeful future for all peoples in Canada.

The past wrongs are many. The deep poverty in so many Aboriginal communities across the country is rooted in a history of racism and discrimination. It is Canada's greatest social injustice. First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada have seldom been treated fairly. Treaty rights have been trampled or ignored. Constitutional rights for Aboriginal peoples have been denied or left unimplemented – pretty words, but no action.

Canadian governments have perpetuated unfairness and inequality for centuries. They have disrespected legal rights and impeded economic progress for Aboriginal communities and families.

Mr. Harper continued this pattern by failing on the commitments of the Kelowna Accord.

His funding for programs and services doesn't even keep up with inflation and population growth. Funding for Aboriginal services is far behind funding for the same programs for other Canadians.

This funding inequality drives Aboriginal people further into poverty. It's one more way that active discrimination continues to this day.

Together, we can build a better future

Jack Layton and the New Democrats will put an end to the discriminatory attitudes that have driven government policy towards First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples for over 140 years. We will stand with Aboriginal peoples in the fight for social justice.

The New Democrats will immediately tackle the problem of poverty that impedes progress. We will establish a foundation on which First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples can help themselves and build a brighter future.

We will implement constructive solutions based on a new, cooperative approach. Working together, we can shape a new relationship between Canada's government and First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Working together, we can bring new hope and new vitality to Aboriginal communities.

To support the development of strong economies and better services in Aboriginal communities, Jack Layton and the New Democrats will:

- Invest \$5 billion over 5 years in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. This will improve health services, help provide adequate housing, water, and infrastructure to include traditional healing, nutrition, fitness, addiction treatment and suicide prevention. This commitment alone will meet the standard set by the Kelowna Accord. It will build the foundation to end poverty.
- Implement aggressive new efforts in education and training of First Nations children, youth and adults. We will respect Ottawa's fiduciary obligations and encourage the participation of public and private sectors with the federal government in skills training initiatives. Federal education funding must recognize comparable levels of funding for non-reserve students. Canada invests far less per student in First Nations schools than is offered to students in provincial schools. Forty communities have no school at all. This discrimination must end.
- Address the needs of urban First Nations, Métis and Inuit citizens, with special attention to the appropriate development and delivery of affordable housing, public health care, education, skills training, and economic opportunities. The New Democrats' comprehensive initiatives to tackle poverty and homelessness, support job creation and greatly improve skills training for all Canadians will create additional new opportunities for Aboriginal peoples.
- Help develop community economies by providing infrastructure so First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people can fully participate in the Canadian economy. We will enhance access to capital, skills training and natural resources, and remove the punitive 2 percent funding cap instituted by the Liberals and maintained by the Harper Conservatives.

- Implement Jordan’s Principle to guarantee First Nations children are not hurt by jurisdictional disputes between governments. In 2007, the New Democrats introduced the “Jordan’s Principle bill to ensure that children are not denied medical care or other essential services while governments bicker over who should pay the bills. The bill was passed unanimously by Parliament. Mr. Harper has not fully implemented it. The first and only provincial signature is the NDP government of Manitoba.
- Create restorative justice and healing approaches that provide indigenous youth better opportunities and choices.
- Ensure that residential school survivors left out by the current agreement are fairly compensated.

Building a relationship based on honour and respect

Aboriginal communities deserve respect, equal treatment and support as they and their citizens work to improve their lives.

Inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights must be fully respected, as the Constitution of Canada requires. We must end the injustices and impediments that have been put in place by past Conservative and Liberal governments. We must work together to tear down the barriers to progress.

Jack Layton and the New Democrats will establish a relationship of respect with First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments. We will:

- Respect the inherent right to self-government by accelerating settlement of final agreements, and fairly and equitably implementing existing agreements.
- Legally recognize the legitimacy and jurisdiction of indigenous governments.
- Immediately ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will reverse the Conservative and Liberal governments’ refusal to sign the Declaration. We will ensure its provisions are properly respected in Canada and incorporated into Canadian law.
- Develop a comprehensive land claims policy that genuinely respects Aboriginal title.
- Engage with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women and appropriate organizations to ensure that their rights and personal safety are assured.
- Ensure equitable participation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and governments in Canada’s stewardship of the environment and resources, and on appropriate boards, commissions and international delegations.
- Support the efforts of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to renew Indigenous languages in this generation, and develop a corps of those able to help teach indigenous languages by including it in education funding.
- Provide funding to Indian and Métis Friendship Centres to help build communities and support training programs for aboriginal youth.

A new beginning

The discrimination and racism of the past cannot be ignored. The wrongs must be acknowledged. As much as is humanly possible, the wrongs must be corrected. They must never be forgotten, because they must never be repeated.

At the same time, urgently, the injustices of the present must end.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit people make prominent contributions to our country, but far too many live and grow up in unacceptable conditions. Unclean and unsafe drinking water. Crumbling schools and homes. Inadequate health care. One in four First Nations children lives in poverty.

Jack Layton and the New Democrats will ensure that Aboriginal peoples have the resources and support to change that. We will help ensure that Aboriginal children have real opportunities. We will help create living conditions that allow them to reach their full potential.

We can and must do better.

Jack Layton and the New Democrats will work with Aboriginal peoples, not against them. We will immediately implement initiatives to establish a new relationship based on social justice. We will help lift the burden of poverty that holds back so many families and children.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples must have the tools they need to rebuild communities, establish strong governments and strong economies, and fully participate in Canadian society.

Working together, we can herald a just new beginning in the relationship between Canada and the peoples who were first to make their home in this land.