



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

507-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-922-7733
Fx: 604-922-7433



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

IMPORTANT 2008 FEDERAL ELECTION INFORMATION

To: All First Nations in BC

From: First Nations Leadership Council
BC AFN Regional Chief – A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo)
First Nations Summit Political Executive (Task Group)
(Grand Chief Edward John, Grand Chief Doug Kelly, Dan Smith)
Union of BC Indian Chiefs Executive
(Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Chief Robert Shintah, Chief Lynda Price)

Date: October 6, 2008

Re: **Federal Election 2008**

As you know, a federal election has been called for Tuesday, October 14, 2008 and Canadian voters will decide upon a new national government.

In early September we wrote to the leaders of the Conservative Party, Liberal Party, NDP, Bloc Quebecois, and Green Party of Canada seeking a clear statement describing their policy and platform from each of the major federal parties. In our letter we identified priority interests of First Nations in BC.

We specifically asked each party to respond to our letter by outlining the commitments they are prepared to make in response to our priorities and to put real action behind the promise of change our people felt on June 11, 2008, after the federal apology to Indian Residential School students and their families. We advised that we intended to make the replies received available to all BC First Nations and asked for a response by September 26th, 2008.

As of September 30, 2008 responses have been received from the Liberal Party of Canada and the Bloc Quebecois. Website visits have also been made to each of the federal parties seeking further information. A copy of the NDP federal election 7-point platform on First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples was located on the NDP website. No response was received nor was any information re: Aboriginal issues found on the federal party websites of the Conservative Party or the Green Party.

This 30-page package contains the following information:

- **Information memo dated October 6, 2008 from the FN Leadership Council**
- **Copy of FNLC letters dated September 10, 2008 to the Conservative Party, Liberal Party, NDP, Bloc Quebecois, and Green Party**
- **Response letters received from the Liberal Party and Bloc Quebecois and copy of the NDP federal election platform on First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples retrieved from the NDP website**

Several ridings in BC (Skeena–Bulkley Valley, Cariboo–Prince George, Prince George–Peace River) have Aboriginal populations of 10% or higher and can be a major factor in determining which candidate is elected and which party forms the next federal government.

We encourage First Nations citizens in BC to participate in the federal current election campaign by asking your local candidates questions on issues of importance to your Nations and by registering to vote and voting on election day, October 14, 2008.

Please note, the national AFN office has undertaken a similar exercise with the major federal parties and asked them to answer a questionnaire on issues affecting First Nations people in Canada. The AFN has committed to providing their information to First Nations in Canada. Please refer to the national AFN website (www.afn.ca) for further information.

IMPORTANT VOTER IDENTIFICATION RULES:

Important changes to the federal electoral process are new, mandatory voter identification rules. Even if you are registered on the voter's list and have a voter card, you will not be permitted to vote unless you can produce the required ID.

You can:

- Show **one original piece of government-issued identification** containing your photo, name and address (like a driver's licence), or
- Show **two original pieces of identification** authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. Both must have your name and one must also have your address (such as a health card and hydro bill).

If a voter does not have identification, the following process applies:

You can **swear an oath** and be vouched for by an elector (like a neighbour or your roommate) who is on the voters list in your polling division, and who has an acceptable piece or pieces of identification. The elector who vouches for you must also swear an oath.

For complete Voter and Voter Identification at the Polls information please refer to the Elections Canada website at www.elections.ca.

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



**BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS**

507-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-922-7733
Fx: 604-922-7433



**FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT**

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



**UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS**

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

September 10, 2008

Hon. Prime Minister Stephen Harper
Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada
Conservative Party of Canada
#1204 – 130 Albert Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4

Dear Prime Minister:

The undersigned leaders of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs have reached important tripartite agreements concerning education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, and Housing with Canada and the Province of British Columbia. Together, through these agreements, we seek to improve the quality of life of First Nations citizens in BC.

In a few weeks, on October 14, 2008, Canadian voters will decide upon a new national government. We are writing early in the campaign to seek a clear statement describing policy and platform from each of the major federal parties.

Before identifying our priority interests, we wish to express our appreciation for your historic apology to former students of the Indian Residential Schools. On June 11, 2008, Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and his father, Dr. Richard Atleo, witnessed from the gallery of Parliament, the apology. Grand Chief Edward John invited several key opinion leaders in BC to observe the apology at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver. We appreciated the tone, the historical facts, and your heart-felt regret for the significant harm to our peoples caused by the Residential Schools.

In the lead-up and aftermath of this apology, Canadians from coast to coast engaged in a very public debate. This process educated Canadians about assimilation policies such as the Residential Schools as never before. Through the apology, the courage of First Nations survivors who shared their stories and unprecedented media coverage Canadians increased their understanding of First Nations issues and, we believe, their support for action to address these issues. We believe that this federal election gives all the major political parties a unique opportunity to put before the Canadian electorate their commitments to put much needed action behind the powerful words of regret expressed on June 11, 2008.

In the Apology, you noted the harm caused by removing children from their families and from rich and vibrant cultures. You recognized that the removal of children from families undermined parenting for successive generations. In May 2008, the Auditor General of Canada reported on her review of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. In this report, the Auditor General identified significant shortcomings with funding, services, and oversight. The Auditor General said, "Although access to good child welfare services alone cannot resolve some of the problems faced by Aboriginal and First Nations children and families, whether on or off reserves, the services are essential to protect these children from abuse or neglect." The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and First Nations children in

care – and the indications that outcomes are poor – call(s) for all parties involved in the child welfare system to find better ways of meeting these children’s needs.” We believe these findings are largely the result of the inter-generational impacts of the Indian Residential Schools systems.

In the conclusion of the Apology, you said “... The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a government, and as a country. ... You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time, and in a very real sense we are now joining you on this journey.”

We are prepared to work with the Government of Canada, Opposition Parties, and the Province of British Columbia to take action promptly to support healing from Residential Schools and to improve significantly the quality of life of First Nations children and families.

In recent months, we have met several times with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. We expressed in person our appreciation that the Government of Canada worked with Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and others from the Assembly of First Nations to develop the Specific Claims legislation. We believe that this unprecedented joint effort was key to producing the new and improved specific claims process.

On August 26, 2008, at our most recent meeting with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, we discussed the Common Table Negotiations. As you may know, negotiators from participating First Nations, Canada, and the Province of BC met a dozen times in recent months to review current mandates and explore opportunities for renewal of federal and provincial treaty mandates. Jody Wilson, A/Chief Commissioner from the BC Treaty Commission, chaired these meetings. We urged Minister Strahl to ensure that Canada engage us in developing a federal response to the Common Table discussions. We believe that Canada should take a similar approach to revitalizing treaty negotiations in BC as with the Specific Claims legislation.

We appreciate the work of Senator Gerry St. Germain. As the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, he has produced Senate reports concerning specific land claims, implementation of modern land claims agreements, and safe drinking water for First Nations, and economic development. We believe that these Senate reports and the information from the Common Table provide a solid foundation of information and recommendations to engage in meaningful change. We are prepared to work with the Government of Canada, Opposition Parties, and the Province of British Columbia to achieve significant progress in the reconciliation of Aboriginal Title and Rights through specific claims, treaty mandate renewal, and negotiations.

We are proud of the work achieved to date through tripartite agreements with Canada and the Province of British Columbia on matters including education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, Housing, and treaty revitalization. We believe that by addressing issues unique to First Nations citizens in British Columbia, that you will address fundamental concerns in this election – economy, environment, and healthcare. By working together with Canada and the Province of BC, we want to seek the implementation of Aboriginal title and rights to our lands, waters, and natural resources. In doing so, we achieve “certainty” and encourage investment. We want to take action jointly on issues such as the pine beetle crisis in our province and protect the environment and support smaller single resource towns and villages. We want to support our languages and culture and heal from the Residential Schools. We want to ensure First Nations involvement in and benefit from resource development in building modern and sustainable economies in our communities and eradicate First Nations’ poverty. We have been proactive in addressing these issues, through working with BC First Nations to develop a series of Action Plans, and Councils to implement those

Plans, which set out an ambitious agenda for achieving real change on sector-specific issues (see attached list of Action Plans and Councils). We seek a cooperative relationship and resourcing to support the implementation of this direction provided by BC First Nations leadership.

There are ridings in British Columbia where First Nations voters can make a difference. We believe our voters should have the opportunity to be as informed as possible in making their choices on October 14th. In this regard, therefore, we are requesting a response from you as Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada outlining the commitments you are prepared to make in response to our priorities and to put real action behind the promise of change our people felt on June 11th. We intend to make the replies we receive immediately available to all BC First Nations and so would ask for a response by September 26th, 2008.

Sincerely,
FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT:



Grand Chief Edward John



Dan Smith



Grand Chief Doug Kelly

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Robert Shintah



Chief Lynda Price

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:



Regional Chief A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo)

List of BC First Nations Action Plans and Councils

Action Plans:

- BC First Nations Economic Development Action Plan
- BC First Nations Energy Action Plan
- BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan
- BC First Nations Forestry and Land Stewardship Action Plan
- BC First Nations Justice Action Plan
- BC First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan
- Blueprint for Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Development
- First Nations Technology Council 2006-2008 Strategic Plan
- Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan
- Tripartite First Nations Health Plan

Councils:

- Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia
- BC First Nations Economic Development Council
- BC First Nations Energy Council
- BC First Nations Fisheries Council
- BC First Nations Forestry Council
- BC First Nations Health Council
- BC First Nations Justice Council
- BC First Nations Technology Council



507-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-922-7733
Fx: 604-922-7433



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

September 10, 2008

Hon. Stephane Dion,
Leader of the Liberal Party,
Liberal Party of Canada
81 Metcalfe Street, Suite 400
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 6M8

Dear M. Dion:

The undersigned leaders of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs have reached important tripartite agreements concerning education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, and Housing with Canada and the Province of British Columbia. Together, through these agreements, we seek to improve the quality of life of First Nations citizens in BC.

In a few weeks, on October 14, 2008, Canadian voters will decide upon a new national government. We are writing early in the campaign to seek a clear statement describing policy and platform from each of the major federal parties.

Before identifying our priority interests, we wish to express our appreciation for your comments following the historic apology to former students of the Indian Residential Schools. On June 11, 2008, Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and his father, Dr. Richard Atleo, witnessed from the gallery of Parliament, the apology. Grand Chief Edward John invited several key opinion leaders in BC to observe the apology at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver. We appreciated the tone, the historical facts, and your heart-felt regret for the significant harm to our peoples caused by the Residential Schools.

In the lead-up and aftermath of this apology, Canadians from coast to coast engaged in a very public debate. This process educated Canadians about assimilation policies such as the Residential Schools as never before. Through the apology, the courage of First Nations survivors who shared their stories and unprecedented media coverage Canadians increased their understanding of First Nations issues and, we believe, their support for action to address these issues. We believe that this federal election gives all the major political parties a unique opportunity to put before the Canadian electorate their commitments to put much needed action behind the powerful words of regret expressed on June 11, 2008.

After the Apology you said, "Government policy destroyed the fabric of family in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. ... And only today are we starting to measure the devastating costs of these terrible policies." In May 2008, the Auditor General of Canada reported on her review of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. In this report, the Auditor General identified significant shortcomings with funding, services, and oversight. The Auditor General said, "Although access to good child welfare services alone cannot resolve some of the problems faced by Aboriginal and First Nations children and families, whether on or off reserves, the services are essential to protect these children from abuse or neglect." The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and First Nations children in

care – and the indications that outcomes are poor – call(s) for all parties involved in the child welfare system to find better ways of meeting these children’s needs.” We believe these findings are largely the result of the inter-generational impacts of the Indian Residential Schools systems.

In your comments following the Apology, you said, “Today’s apology is about a past that should have been completely different. But it must also be about the future. It must be about collective reconciliation and fundamental changes. It must be about moving forward together, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, into a future based on respect.”

We are prepared to work with the Government of Canada, Opposition Parties, and the Province of British Columbia to take action promptly to support healing from Residential Schools and to improve significantly the quality of life of First Nations children and families.

In recent months, we have met several times with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. We expressed in person our appreciation that the Government of Canada worked with Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and others from the Assembly of First Nations to develop the Specific Claims legislation. We believe that this unprecedented joint effort was key to producing the new and improved specific claims process.

On August 26, 2008, at our most recent meeting with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, we discussed the Common Table Negotiations. As you may know, negotiators from participating First Nations, Canada, and the Province of BC met a dozen times in recent months to review current mandates and explore opportunities for renewal of federal and provincial treaty mandates. Jody Wilson, A/Chief Commissioner from the BC Treaty Commission, chaired these meetings. We urged Minister Strahl to ensure that Canada engage us in developing a federal response to the Common Table discussions. We believe that Canada should take a similar approach to revitalizing treaty negotiations in BC as with the Specific Claims legislation.

We appreciate the work of Senator Gerry St. Germain. As the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, he has produced Senate reports concerning specific land claims, implementation of modern land claims agreements, and safe drinking water for First Nations, and economic development. We believe that these Senate reports and the information from the Common Table provide a solid foundation of information and recommendations to engage in meaningful change. We are prepared to work with the Government of Canada, Opposition Parties, and the Province of British Columbia to achieve significant progress in the reconciliation of Aboriginal Title and Rights through specific claims, treaty mandate renewal, and negotiations. We seek your commitment as Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada that these important initiatives will continue should the Liberal Party form the next federal government.

We are proud of the work achieved to date through tripartite agreements with Canada and the Province of British Columbia on matters including education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, Housing, and treaty revitalization. We believe that by addressing issues unique to First Nations citizens in British Columbia, that you will address fundamental concerns in this election – economy, environment, and healthcare. By working together with Canada and the Province of BC, we want to seek the implementation of Aboriginal title and rights to our lands, waters, and natural resources. In doing so, we achieve “certainty” and encourage investment. We want to take action jointly on issues such as the pine beetle crisis in our province and protect the environment and support smaller single resource towns and villages. We want to support our languages and culture and heal from the Residential Schools. We want to ensure First Nations involvement in and benefit from resource development in building modern and sustainable economies in our communities and

eradicate First Nations' poverty. We have been proactive in addressing these issues, through working with BC First Nations to develop a series of Action Plans, and Councils to implement those Plans, which set out an ambitious agenda for achieving real change on sector-specific issues (see attached list of Action Plans and Councils). We seek a cooperative relationship and resourcing to support the implementation of this direction provided by BC First Nations leadership.

There are ridings in British Columbia where First Nations voters can make a difference. We believe our voters should have the opportunity to be as informed as possible in making their choices on October 14th. In this regard, therefore, we are requesting a response from you as Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada outlining the commitments you are prepared to make in response to our priorities and to put real action behind the promise of change our people felt on June 11th. We intend to make the replies we receive immediately available to all BC First Nations and so would ask for a response by September 26th, 2008.

Sincerely,

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT:



Grand Chief Edward John



Dan Smith



Grand Chief Doug Kelly

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Chief Stewart Phillip




Chief Robert Shintah



Chief Lynda Price

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:



Regional Chief A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo)

List of BC First Nations Action Plans and Councils

Action Plans:

- BC First Nations Economic Development Action Plan
- BC First Nations Energy Action Plan
- BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan
- BC First Nations Forestry and Land Stewardship Action Plan
- BC First Nations Justice Action Plan
- BC First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan
- Blueprint for Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Development
- First Nations Technology Council 2006-2008 Strategic Plan
- Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan
- Tripartite First Nations Health Plan

Councils:

- Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia
- BC First Nations Economic Development Council
- BC First Nations Energy Council
- BC First Nations Fisheries Council
- BC First Nations Forestry Council
- BC First Nations Health Council
- BC First Nations Justice Council
- BC First Nations Technology Council



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

507-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-922-7733
Fx: 604-922-7433



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

September 10, 2008

Mr. Jack Layton
Leader of the NDP
New Democratic Party
300 - 279 Laurier West
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5J9

Dear Mr. Layton:

The undersigned leaders of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs have reached important tripartite agreements concerning education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, and Housing with Canada and the Province of British Columbia. Together, through these agreements, we seek to improve the quality of life of First Nations citizens in BC.

In a few weeks, on October 14, 2008, Canadian voters will decide upon a new national government. We are writing early in the campaign to seek a clear statement describing policy and platform from each of the major federal parties. Before identifying our priority interests, we wish to express our appreciation for your role in achieving the historic apology to former students of the Indian Residential Schools.

On June 11, 2008, Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and his father, Dr. Richard Atleo, witnessed from the gallery of Parliament, the apology. Grand Chief Edward John invited several key opinion leaders to observe the apology at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver. We appreciated the tone, the historical facts, and your heart-felt regret for the significant harm to our peoples caused by the Residential Schools.

In the lead-up and aftermath of this apology, Canadians from coast to coast engaged in a very public debate. This process educated Canadians about assimilation policies such as the Residential Schools as never before. Through the apology, the courage of First Nations survivors who shared their stories and unprecedented media coverage Canadians increased their understanding of First Nations issues and, we believe, their support for action to address these issues. We believe that this federal election gives all the political parties a unique opportunity to put before the Canadian electorate their commitments to put much needed action behind the powerful words of regret expressed on June 11, 2008.

In your comments after the Apology, you said, "The legacy of Residential Schools casts a shadow over our country. It tore apart families and communities for generations, and this continues to be felt, and felt very personally." In May 2008, the Auditor General of Canada reported on her review of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. In this report, the Auditor General identified significant shortcomings with funding, services, and oversight. The Auditor General said, "Although access to good child welfare services alone cannot resolve some of the problems faced by Aboriginal and First Nations children and families, whether on or off reserves, the services are essential to protect these children from abuse or neglect." The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and First Nations children in

care – and the indications that outcomes are poor – call(s) for all parties involved in the child welfare system to find better ways of meeting these children’s needs.” We believe these findings are largely the result of the inter-generational impacts of the Indian Residential Schools systems.

After the Apology, you said “Let us reverse the horrific and shameful statistics afflicting aboriginal populations, now: the high rates of poverty, suicide, the poor or having no education, overcrowding, crumbling housing, and unsafe drinking water. Let us make sure that all survivors of the Residential Schools receive the recognition and compensation that is due them.” We are prepared to work with the Government, Opposition Parties and the Province of British Columbia to take action promptly to support healing from Residential Schools and to improve significantly the quality of life of First Nations children and families.

In recent months, we have met several times with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. We expressed in person our appreciation that the Government of Canada worked with Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and others from the Assembly of First Nations to develop the Specific Claims legislation. We believe that this unprecedented joint effort was key to producing the new and improved specific claims process.

On August 26, 2008, at our most recent meeting with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, we discussed the Common Table Negotiations. As you may know, negotiators from participating First Nations, Canada, and the Province of BC met a dozen times in recent months to review current mandates and explore opportunities for renewal of federal and provincial treaty mandates. Jody Wilson, A/Chief Commissioner from the BC Treaty Commission, chaired these meetings. We urged Minister Strahl to ensure that Canada engage us in developing a federal response to the Common Table discussions. We believe that Canada should take a similar approach to revitalizing treaty negotiations in BC as with the Specific Claims legislation.

We appreciate the work of Senator Gerry St. Germain. As the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, he has produced Senate reports concerning specific land claims, implementation of modern land claims agreements, and safe drinking water for First Nations, and economic development. We believe that these Senate reports and the information from the Common Table provide a solid foundation of information and recommendations to engage in meaningful change. We are prepared to work with the Government of Canada, Opposition Parties, and the Province of British Columbia to achieve significant progress in the reconciliation of Aboriginal Title and Rights through specific claims, treaty mandate renewal, and negotiations. We seek your commitment as Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada that these important initiatives will continue should the NDP form the next federal government.

We are proud of the work achieved to date through tripartite agreements with Canada and the Province of British Columbia on matters including education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, Housing, and treaty revitalization. We believe that by addressing issues unique to First Nations citizens in British Columbia, that you will address fundamental concerns in this election – economy, environment, and healthcare. By working together with Canada and the Province of BC, we want to seek the implementation of Aboriginal title and rights to our lands, waters, and natural resources. In doing so, we achieve “certainty” and encourage investment. We want to take action jointly on issues such as the pine beetle crisis in our province and protect the environment and support smaller single resource towns and villages. We want to support our languages and culture and heal from the Residential Schools. We want to ensure First Nations involvement in and benefit from resource development in building modern and sustainable economies in our communities and

eradicate First Nations' poverty. We have been proactive in addressing these issues, through working with BC First Nations to develop a series of Action Plans, and Councils to implement those Plans, which set out an ambitious agenda for achieving real change on sector-specific issues (see attached list of Action Plans and Councils). We seek a cooperative relationship and resourcing to support the implementation of this direction provided by BC First Nations leadership.

There are ridings in British Columbia where First Nations voters can make a difference. We believe our voters should have the opportunity to be as informed as possible in making their choices on October 14th. In this regard, therefore, we are requesting a response from you as Leader of the NDP outlining the commitments you are prepared to make in response to our priorities and to put real action behind the promise of change our people felt on June 11th. We intend to make the replies we receive immediately available to all BC First Nations and so would ask for a response by September 26th, 2008.

Sincerely,
FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT:



Grand Chief Edward John



Dan Smith



Grand Chief Doug Kelly

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Robert Shintah



Chief Lynda Price

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:



Regional Chief A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo)

List of BC First Nations Action Plans and Councils

Action Plans:

- BC First Nations Economic Development Action Plan
- BC First Nations Energy Action Plan
- BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan
- BC First Nations Forestry and Land Stewardship Action Plan
- BC First Nations Justice Action Plan
- BC First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan
- Blueprint for Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Development
- First Nations Technology Council 2006-2008 Strategic Plan
- Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan
- Tripartite First Nations Health Plan

Councils:

- Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia
- BC First Nations Economic Development Council
- BC First Nations Energy Council
- BC First Nations Fisheries Council
- BC First Nations Forestry Council
- BC First Nations Health Council
- BC First Nations Justice Council
- BC First Nations Technology Council



**BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS**

507-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

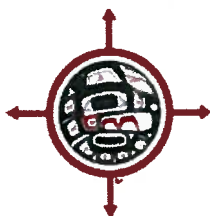
Ph: 604-922-7733
Fx: 604-922-7433



**FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT**

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



**UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS**

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

September 10, 2008

M. Gilles Duceppe,
Leader of the Bloc Quebecois
3730, Boul. Crémazie Est
4e étage
Montréal, Québec H2A 1B4

Dear M Duceppe:

The undersigned leaders of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs have reached important tripartite agreements concerning education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, and Housing with Canada and the Province of British Columbia. Together, through these agreements, we seek to improve the quality of life of First Nations citizens in BC.

In a few weeks, on October 14, 2008, Canadian voters will decide upon a new national government. We are writing early in the campaign to seek a clear statement describing policy and platform from each of the major federal parties. Before identifying our priority interests, we wish to express our appreciation for your comments following the historic apology to former students of the Indian Residential Schools.

On June 11, 2008, Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and his father, Dr. Richard Atleo, witnessed from the gallery of Parliament, the apology. Grand Chief Edward John invited several key opinion leaders to observe the apology at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver. We appreciated the tone, the historical facts, and your heart-felt regret for the significant harm to our peoples caused by the Residential Schools.

In the lead-up and aftermath of this apology, Canadians from coast to coast engaged in a very public debate. This process educated Canadians about assimilation policies such as the Residential Schools as never before. Through the apology, the courage of First Nations survivors who shared their stories and unprecedented media coverage Canadians increased their understanding of First Nations issues and, we believe, their support for action to address these issues. We believe that this federal election gives all the major political parties a unique opportunity to put before the Canadian electorate their commitments to put much needed action behind the powerful words of regret expressed on June 11, 2008.

In your statement following the Apology, you said, "These 150,000 people were abducted from their mothers and fathers. They were separated from their sisters and brothers. They were forcibly uprooted from their communities and their traditional cultures." In May 2008, the Auditor General of Canada reported on her review of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. In this report, the Auditor General identified significant shortcomings with funding, services, and oversight. The Auditor General said, "Although access to good child welfare services alone cannot resolve some of the problems faced by Aboriginal and First Nations children and families, whether on or off reserves, the services are essential to protect these children from abuse or neglect." The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and First Nations children in care – and the indications that outcomes are poor

call(s) for all parties involved in the child welfare system to find better ways of meeting these children's needs." We believe these findings are largely the result of the inter-generational impacts of the Indian Residential School systems.

In the conclusion of your statement following the Apology, you said, "Yet this apology is necessary. It is necessary but not sufficient. As Romeo Saganash says, "An apology, one made, is only as good as the actions that come after it". For those who lost their childhood in the Residential Schools, the best apology consists of real action that will allow their children and grandchildren to hope in the future. This means that the government must take action now."

We are prepared to work with the Government of Canada, Opposition Parties, and the Province of British Columbia to take action promptly to support healing from Residential Schools and to improve significantly the quality of life of First Nations children and families.

In recent months, we have met several times with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. We expressed in person our appreciation that the Government of Canada worked with Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and others from the Assembly of First Nations to develop the Specific Claims legislation. We believe that this unprecedented joint effort was key to producing the new and improved specific claims process.

On August 26, 2008, at our most recent meeting with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, we discussed the Common Table Negotiations. As you may know, negotiators from participating First Nations, Canada, and the Province of BC met a dozen times in recent months to review current mandates and explore opportunities for renewal of federal and provincial treaty mandates. Jody Wilson, A/Chief Commissioner from the BC Treaty Commission, chaired these meetings. We urged Minister Strahl to ensure that Canada engage us in developing a federal response to the Common Table discussions. We believe that Canada should take a similar approach to revitalizing treaty negotiations in BC as with the Specific Claims legislation.

We appreciate the work of Senator Gerry St. Germain. As the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, he has produced Senate reports concerning specific land claims, implementation of modern land claims agreements, and safe drinking water for First Nations, and economic development. We believe that these Senate reports and the information from the Common Table provide a solid foundation of information and recommendations to engage in meaningful change. We are prepared to work with the Government of Canada, Opposition Parties, and the Province of British Columbia to achieve significant progress in the reconciliation of Aboriginal Title and Rights through specific claims, treaty mandate renewal, and negotiations. We seek your commitment as Leader of Bloc Quebecois that these important initiatives will continue should the Bloc form the next federal government.

We are proud of the work achieved to date through tripartite agreements with Canada and the Province of British Columbia on matters including education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, Housing, and treaty revitalization. We believe that by addressing issues unique to First Nations citizens in British Columbia, that you will address fundamental concerns in this election – economy, environment, and healthcare. By working together with Canada and the Province of BC, we want to seek the implementation of Aboriginal title and rights to our lands, waters, and natural resources. In doing so, we achieve "certainty" and encourage investment. We want to take action jointly on issues such as the pine beetle crisis in our province and protect the environment and support smaller single resource towns and villages. We want to support our languages and culture and heal from the Residential Schools. We want to ensure First Nations involvement in and benefit

from resource development in building modern and sustainable economies in our communities and eradicate First Nations' poverty. We have been proactive in addressing these issues, through working with BC First Nations to develop a series of Action Plans, and Councils to implement those Plans, which set out an ambitious agenda for achieving real change on sector-specific issues (see attached list of Action Plans and Councils). We seek a cooperative relationship and resourcing to support the implementation of this direction provided by BC First Nations leadership.

There are ridings in British Columbia where First Nations voters can make a difference. We believe our voters should have the opportunity to be as informed as possible in making their choices on October 14th. In this regard, therefore, we are requesting a response from you as Leader of the Bloc Quebecois outlining the commitments you are prepared to make in response to our priorities and to put real action behind the promise of change our people felt on June 11th. We intend to make the replies we receive immediately available to all BC First Nations and so would ask for a response by September 26th, 2008.

Sincerely,
FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT:



Grand Chief Edward John



Dan Smith



Grand Chief Doug Kelly

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Robert Shintah



Chief Lynda Price

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:



Regional Chief A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo)

List of BC First Nations Action Plans and Councils

Action Plans:

- BC First Nations Economic Development Action Plan
- BC First Nations Energy Action Plan
- BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan
- BC First Nations Forestry and Land Stewardship Action Plan
- BC First Nations Justice Action Plan
- BC First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan
- Blueprint for Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Development
- First Nations Technology Council 2006-2008 Strategic Plan
- Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan
- Tripartite First Nations Health Plan

Councils:

- Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia
- BC First Nations Economic Development Council
- BC First Nations Energy Council
- BC First Nations Fisheries Council
- BC First Nations Forestry Council
- BC First Nations Health Council
- BC First Nations Justice Council
- BC First Nations Technology Council

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

507-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-922-7733
Fx: 604-922-7433



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

September 10, 2008

Ms Elizabeth May
Leader of the Green Party of Canada,
Box 997, Stn. B
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R1

Dear Ms May:

The undersigned leaders of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs have reached important tripartite agreements concerning education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, and Housing with Canada and the Province of British Columbia. Together, through these agreements, we seek to improve the quality of life of First Nations citizens in BC.

In a few weeks, on October 14, 2008, Canadian voters will decide upon a new national government. We are writing early in the campaign to seek a clear statement describing policy and platform from each of the federal parties.

On June 11, 2008, Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and his father, Dr. Richard Atleo, witnessed from the gallery of Parliament, the apology. Grand Chief Edward John invited several key opinion leaders to observe the apology at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver. We appreciated the tone, the historical facts, and the sincerity of the statement of regret for the significant harm to our peoples caused by the Residential Schools.

In the lead-up and aftermath of this apology, Canadians from coast to coast engaged in a very public debate. This process educated Canadians about assimilation policies such as the Residential Schools as never before. Through the apology, the courage of First Nations survivors who shared their stories and unprecedented media coverage Canadians increased their understanding of First Nations issues and, we believe, their support for action to address these issues. We believe that this federal election gives all the political parties a unique opportunity to put before the Canadian electorate their commitments to put much needed action behind the powerful words of regret expressed on June 11, 2008.

In May 2008, the Auditor General of Canada reported on her review of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. In this report, the Auditor General identified significant shortcomings with funding, services, and oversight. The Auditor General said, "Although access to good child welfare services alone cannot resolve some of the problems faced by Aboriginal and First Nations children and families, whether on or off reserves, the services are essential to protect these children from abuse or neglect." The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and First Nations children in care – and the indications that outcomes are poor – call(s) for all parties involved in the child welfare system to find better ways of meeting these children's needs." We believe these findings are largely the result of the inter-generational impacts of the Indian Residential Schools systems.

After the Apology, you said, "Today's apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to survivors of Residential Schools provides an opportunity to begin the act of healing. We sincerely hope that healing will evolve from this apology, and that it will be a significant step toward closing a tragic chapter in Canada's history." We are prepared to work with the Government, Opposition Parties and the Province of British Columbia to take action promptly to support healing from Residential Schools and to improve significantly the quality of life of First Nations children and families.

In recent months, we have met several times with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. We expressed in person our appreciation that the Government of Canada worked with Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and others from the Assembly of First Nations to develop the Specific Claims legislation. We believe that this unprecedented joint effort was key to producing the new and improved specific claims process.

On August 26, 2008, at our most recent meeting with the Hon. Chuck Strahl, we discussed the Common Table Negotiations. As you may know, negotiators from participating First Nations, Canada, and the Province of BC met a dozen times in recent months to review current mandates and explore opportunities for renewal of federal and provincial treaty mandates. Jody Wilson, A/Chief Commissioner from the BC Treaty Commission, chaired these meetings. We urged Minister Strahl to ensure that Canada engage us in developing a federal response to the Common Table discussions. We believe that Canada should take a similar approach to revitalizing treaty negotiations in BC as with the Specific Claims legislation.

We appreciate the work of Senator Gerry St. Germain. As the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, he has produced Senate reports concerning specific land claims, implementation of modern land claims agreements, and safe drinking water for First Nations, and economic development. We believe that these Senate reports and the information from the Common Table provide a solid foundation of information and recommendations to engage in meaningful change. We are prepared to work with the Government of Canada, Opposition Parties, and the Province of British Columbia to achieve significant progress in the reconciliation of Aboriginal Title and Rights through specific claims, treaty mandate renewal, and negotiations. We seek your commitment as Leader of the Green Party of Canada that these important initiatives will continue should the Green Party form the next federal government.

We are proud of the work achieved to date through tripartite agreements with Canada and the Province of British Columbia on matters including education jurisdiction, Health Services & Governance, Housing, and treaty revitalization. We believe that by addressing issues unique to First Nations citizens in British Columbia, that you will address fundamental concerns in this election – economy, environment, and healthcare. By working together with Canada and the Province of BC, we want to seek the implementation of Aboriginal title and rights to our lands, waters, and natural resources. In doing so, we achieve "certainty" and encourage investment. We want to take action jointly on issues such as the pine beetle crisis in our province and protect the environment and support smaller single resource towns and villages. We want to support our languages and culture and heal from the Residential Schools. We want to ensure First Nations involvement in and benefit from resource development in building modern and sustainable economies in our communities and eradicate First Nations' poverty. We have been proactive in addressing these issues, through working with BC First Nations to develop a series of Action Plans, and Councils to implement those Plans, which set out an ambitious agenda for achieving real change on sector-specific issues (see attached list of Action Plans and Councils). We seek a cooperative relationship and resourcing to support the implementation of this direction provided by BC First Nations leadership.

There are ridings in British Columbia where First Nations voters can make a difference. We believe our voters should have the opportunity to be as informed as possible in making their choices on October 14th. In this regard, therefore, we are requesting a response from you as Leader of the Green Party of Canada outlining the commitments you are prepared to make in response to our priorities and to put real action behind the promise of change our people felt on June 11th. We intend to make the replies we receive immediately available to all BC First Nations and so would ask for a response by September 26th, 2008.

Sincerely,

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT:



Grand Chief Edward John



Dan Smith



Grand Chief Doug Kelly

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Robert Shintah



Chief Lynda Price

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:



Regional Chief A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo)

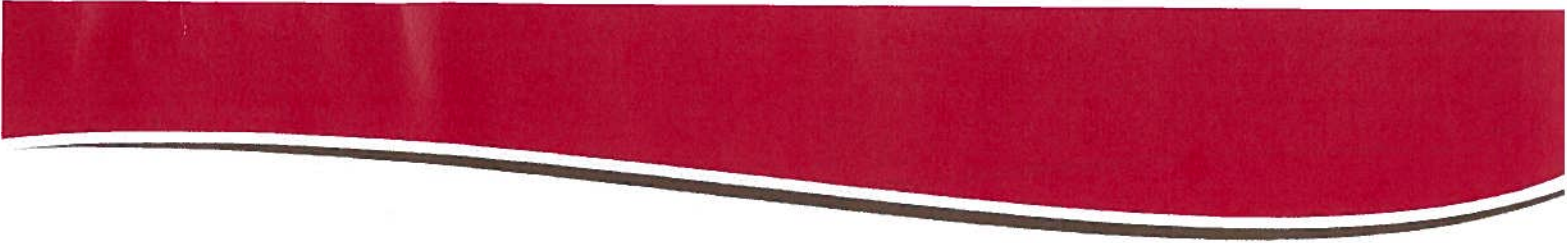
List of BC First Nations Action Plans and Councils

Action Plans:

- BC First Nations Economic Development Action Plan
- BC First Nations Energy Action Plan
- BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan
- BC First Nations Forestry and Land Stewardship Action Plan
- BC First Nations Justice Action Plan
- BC First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan
- Blueprint for Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Development
- First Nations Technology Council 2006-2008 Strategic Plan
- Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan
- Tripartite First Nations Health Plan

Councils:

- Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia
- BC First Nations Economic Development Council
- BC First Nations Energy Council
- BC First Nations Fisheries Council
- BC First Nations Forestry Council
- BC First Nations Health Council
- BC First Nations Justice Council
- BC First Nations Technology Council



Liberal Party of Canada
81 Metcalfe Street, Suite 400
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6M8

September 25, 2008

First Nations Leadership Council
500 – 342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 1B6

Dear Council Members:

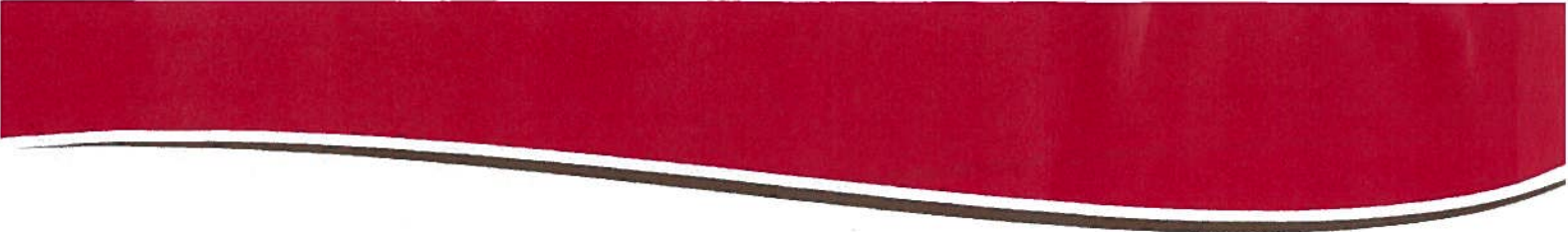
Thank you for your recent correspondence of September 10th seeking the Liberal Party of Canada's positions on a variety of issues affecting First Nations citizens in British Columbia. I appreciate the opportunity to share my party's plan to forge a new relationship with Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis citizens.

Aboriginal Peoples, who represent the fastest-growing part of Canada's population and a significant portion of our country's young people, must have access to all the opportunities that will help Canada thrive in the 21st century. This is a matter of social justice and a condition of Canada's continued success.

We can not be intimidated by the scale of the challenge or discouraged by the failures of the past. We owe it to our children to pass along an even better country than we inherited from our parents and we will not do so as long as Aboriginal Peoples continue to be left behind.

Too many aboriginal children live lives of poverty and uncertainty. Those members of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities living on and off reserves in rural areas face tremendous challenges. That is equally true for those who have decided to live off reserve in Canada's cities: a rapidly growing community deserves the security of good housing, education and training, and real opportunities to participate in Canadian life on an equal footing with other Canadians.


www.liberal.ca



Canada needs respectful and progressive partnerships with our Aboriginal Peoples—partnerships characterized by trust, with real engagement and participation by Aboriginal Canadians; partnerships that will create real opportunity and a deep respect for the principle of self-government.

The Kelowna Accord represented this type of partnership. It was an historic consensus between the federal government, provinces, territories and Aboriginal Peoples, committing nearly \$5 billion to clear and reasonable targets to improve aboriginal health, education and housing outcomes both on reserve and off reserve. Unfortunately, the accord was scrapped by the Conservatives.

Over the course of our mandate, a new Liberal government will bring back the Kelowna Accord. We will also fulfill the commitments within the First Nations-Crown Political Accord, the Inuit Partnership Accord, the Métis Nation Framework Agreement, and the Accords on Cooperative Development between the federal government and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and Native Women's Association of Canada.

On the international stage, the Conservatives demonstrated their lack of concern and respect for Canada's aboriginal population by being one of only four governments in the world that to vote against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This marked the first time in its history that Canada has failed to commit to a major international human rights treaty. A Liberal government will reverse this historical disgrace, sign and ratify the Declaration and show the world that Canada can be a leader in its treatment of its aboriginal population.

With the Residential Schools Apology and the start of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Canada and its Aboriginal peoples have begun to forge a new relationship. We now have an opportunity to strengthen this relationship and we must not miss it. But restoring Kelowna is only a starting point. Long standing grievances must also be addressed.

Where modern land claims agreements exist, a Liberal government will respect and uphold the spirit and intent of these agreements. We will also work towards establishment of an independent body to resolve comprehensive claims and to ensure that self-government agreements are respected and fully implemented.

A Liberal government will also work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis to establish a transparent process for the development of a federal policy for consultation and accommodation. As the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled, the federal and provincial

Crown has a legal duty to consult, and, where appropriate, accommodate when Crown conduct may adversely impact established or potential aboriginal and treaty rights.

Liberals have worked hard to bring the issues affecting British Columbia First Nations to the forefront in Ottawa. In particular, we have raised the issue of the Pine Beetle on several occasions, an issue that has a direct impact on the lives and jobs of thousands of First Nations throughout the B.C. interior, and, because of Conservative inaction, is now spreading to areas of Alberta. A new Liberal government would dedicate \$250 million to address the Pine Beetle crisis in British Columbia.

As a country we must ensure that we hear the voices of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in their own languages, and that these aboriginal voices and languages continue to enrich the cultural heritage of the world. I am pleased to inform you that a Liberal government will enhance the Aboriginal Languages Initiative to support the preservation, revitalization and promotion of aboriginal languages and restore the unjustifiable cuts to this initiative by the Conservatives.

In recognition of the fact that a one-size fits all approach to First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations is unproductive, a Liberal government will work with aboriginal organizations to ensure the Green Shift, our aggressive plan to tackle climate change in Canada, takes into account their specific needs and realities. To help in accomplishing this goal, a Liberal government will re-establish the First Nations' Advisory Committee that the Conservatives abolished. A Liberal government will also create a new Joint National Climate Change Advisory Panel to foster shared initiatives of the Government of Canada and First Nations, Métis and Inuit on climate change mitigation policies.

A new Liberal government will treat Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis with respect, and will forge a new relationship between aboriginal peoples and the federal government. We look forward to working with you to achieve these priorities.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

Doug Ferguson, President
Liberal Party of Canada





Envoi par fax

Le 20 septembre 2008

First Nations Leadership Council

Chiefs,

Vous trouverez, ci-joint, le résumé de notre plateforme politique sur les Autochtones pour les élections fédérales 2008.

Nous espérons que cette plateforme fournie vous permettra de mieux comprendre notre action politique.

Nous vous prions d'agréer l'expression de nos sentiments distingués.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dominic Labrie".

Dominic Labrie
Cabinet du chef du Bloc Québécois
3730, Crémazie Est, 4^e étage
Montréal (Québec)
H2A 1B4

Bloc Québécois Platform: Aboriginal Nations

Since its founding, the Bloc Québécois has made Aboriginal issues one of its federal priorities because it recognizes the major contribution that Aboriginal peoples make to Québec society. The Bloc has made every effort to advance the current debate, generate new ideas and examine ways to develop closer relations between Aboriginal peoples and the Québec people. It has long supported Québec Aboriginal nations in their quest for the recognition of their right to move closer to self-government.

The Bloc recognizes that Aboriginal peoples have their own unique identity and that they form nations. As such, it respects their right to guide, develop and preserve their languages, cultures, customs and traditions. The Bloc Québécois believes that the ten Aboriginal Nations and the Innu Nation living in Québec will be among the founding peoples of a sovereign Québec and that an association based on government-to-government relationships will be essential for Québec's development. This association will be akin to the *Paix des Braves* (Agreement Respecting a New Relationship between the Cree Nation and the Government of Québec) and will therefore be unlike the state of subordination in which the federal government has always kept First Nations. In essence, Québec sovereignty will respect their interests and basic rights, including existing Aboriginal and treaty rights recognized by the current Constitution of Canada.

An Unacceptable Situation

The socio-economic situation of Aboriginal peoples continues to deteriorate. An unemployment rate that occasionally exceeds 75 %, a youth suicide rate that is twice that of Québec youth, an unacceptable illiteracy rate, polydrug use and domestic violence issues, and some of the most substandard housing conditions all give a snapshot of the conditions Aboriginal communities across Canada must deal with each and every day.

Over a decade ago, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, also known as the Erasmus-Dussault Commission, put forward a vast, twenty-year commitment to attain self-government for Aboriginal peoples.

Its report, which contained more than 400 recommendations, was approved by Aboriginal peoples in Québec and Canada. Nevertheless, the Conservative government, just like the Liberal government before it, has let that report gather dust ever since it was released more than ten years ago.

In a report released in May 2006, the Auditor General of Canada accused the federal government of failing to address satisfactorily the 37 recommendations her Office had made for First Nations. This is especially true for the recommendations that she deems the most important: those that deal with the quality of life and well-being of First Nations members.

In May 2008, the Auditor General reiterated the critical shortage of federal funding for First Nations. Funding for child welfare on reserves does not fulfill federal obligations. In addition, the Conservative government continues to be

most disrespectful of Québec First Nations when it comes to child welfare services on reserves. It held out the possibility of a positive response to a request for a grant for child welfare services for Québec First Nations but then rejected that request more than a year later, despite the Auditor General's reprimand.

There seems to be the same level of disinterest in the implementation of the 2005 Kelowna Accord, which pledged more than \$5 billion over five years to at least narrow the gap between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

It is true that the primary objective of the Kelowna Accord, intended as a temporary measure, was not to address the core of the problem, as needs and expectations are much greater, especially among Québec First Nations.

As stated at the Socio-economic Forum of the First Nations of Québec, held in October 2006 in Mashteuiatsh, the goal of Québec's First Nations is to create 10,000 jobs, get 10,000 drop-outs back in school and build 10,000 new housing units in ten years: a project of a "10,000 possibilities". The First Nations of Québec have been waiting since the fall of 2006 for a response from the Conservative government on the implementation and funding of that project.

Actions taken by the Bloc

The Leader of the Bloc Québécois delivered a speech at the Socio-economic Forum in which he reiterated the party's support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Gilles Duceppe also stressed the urgency of implementing the recommendations of the Erasmus-Dussault Report and drew attention to the importance of improving the socio-economic living conditions of the First Nations of Québec.

The Leader of the Bloc took this opportunity to offer to help the members of the Assembly of the First Nations of Québec organize an annual lobby day for Québec Aboriginals. That day, held on December 10, 2007, was the first of its kind for Aboriginals in Canada.

That contribution by the Bloc was not unusual. As a matter of fact, the Bloc does everything possible to ensure that Aboriginal peoples take part in the development, preparation and implementation of any government or political initiative that will improve their lives or promote their rights and defend their interests.

In addition, the Leader of the Bloc Québécois and the Critic for Indian and Northern Affairs have had many opportunities to connect with Aboriginal peoples and have created new opportunities, too.

Lastly, the Bloc ensured that the Government of Canada's official apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools was offered with great dignity and in collaboration with representatives of Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

The Bloc Québécois is committed to continuing its efforts to strengthen ties between Aboriginal peoples and the Québec people, by promoting the creation of a genuine partnership.

The Bloc is committed to continuing its efforts to ensure that Aboriginal peoples take part in the development, preparation and implementation of any government or policy initiative that will improve their lives or promote their rights and defend their interests.

The Bloc, along with Aboriginal peoples, will appeal to the federal government to address the inequalities that seriously affect Aboriginal communities.

The Bloc will continue to demand that the federal government fully comply with treaties so as to form a true partnership with Aboriginal peoples based on trust, mutual respect and the recognition of their rights.

The Bloc will push to ensure that an independent inquiry sheds light on the slaughtering of sled dogs in the High Arctic between 1950 and 1970.

The Bloc, in support of the First Nations of Québec, will require that the federal government follow up its apology for residential school abuse with concrete action.

The Bloc will support the First Nations of Québec with their project of "10,000 possibilities".

The Bloc will also push to ensure that adequate consultations are held prior to the amendment of existing laws that affect First Nations.

In short, Aboriginal peoples in Québec can always count on the Bloc Québécois in the House of Commons.

Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic

For the Bloc Québécois, any solution in the Arctic must involve the Inuit who live there. They must be integrated into the negotiation process and be provided with assistance to develop their economy.

The Bloc Québécois denounces the militarization of the Arctic. Canada should explore other avenues such as an Arctic convention that would be based on the Antarctic Convention, which requires Member States to take measures in their respective jurisdictions to respect the environment, regulate resource development and demilitarize the region.

New Democrats outline 7-point Aboriginal platform

It's time to end the discrimination, racism and neglect: Layton

WINNIPEG – The New Democrat's Aboriginal Affairs Critic Jean Crowder (Nanaimo-Cowichan) presented the party's seven-point Aboriginal platform, addressing issues ranging from investing in basic infrastructure for clean water and safe housing to fairly compensating residential school survivors.

"We will immediately implement strategies to establish a new relationship based on social justice," said New Democrat leader Jack Layton. "We will help lift the burden of poverty that holds back so many families and children."

To support the development of strong Aboriginal communities, Jack Layton and the New Democrats commit to:

- Invest \$5 billion over 5 years in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to improve health services, provide adequate housing, water and infrastructure, including traditional healing, nutrition and addiction treatment and suicide prevention
- Implement aggressive new efforts in education and training of children, youth and adults, encouraging participation in the public and private sectors
- 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
- Help develop community economies so First Nations, Métis and Inuit people can fully participate in the Canadian economy
- Implement Jordan's Principle to guarantee First Nations children are not hurt by jurisdictional disputes between governments
- 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

Jack Layton and the New Democrats will establish a relationship of respect with First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments. They 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, reversing the Conservative and Liberal governments' refusal to sign the Declaration
- Develop a comprehensive land claims policy that genuinely respects Aboriginal title
- Ensure equitable participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and governments in Canada's stewardship of the environment and resources
- Support the efforts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to renew indigenous languages in this generation, and to develop a corps of those able to help teach indigenous languages by including it in education funding

The New Democrat platform is fully costed with balanced budgets each and every year.

Ms. Crowder was joined by two of the 11 Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit candidates currently running in the federal election. Tania Cameron is running in Kenora, Ontario and Ron Cadotte in Chatham-Ken-Essex, also in Ontario. Of all the political parties, the New Democrats are running the most number of Aboriginal candidates.