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Statements

BC NDP commits to Aboriginal peoples' rights and reconciliation

The BC Federation of Labour says that commitments made today by the BC NDP to First Nations leaders will address historic wrongs, come to grips with contemporary injustice and chart a path for reconciliation.

Speaking at the Union of BC Indian Chiefs annual meeting in Vancouver, party leader John Horgan promised that an NDP government will:

- adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the federal government and many provinces have embraced, but the Clark government has refused to do; and
- act on all 94 recommendations (calls to action) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that chronicled the dark history and abuses of Canada's residential school system and the impacts on Aboriginal children and their families.

"Together these are two concrete steps that the BC government can take to build a more respectful and meaningful relationship with Aboriginal peoples," says Federation president Irene Lanzinger.

"Horgan's commitments will help build a partnership that is essential if we are to move our province forward socially and economically."

The declaration recognizes Indigenous peoples' basic rights on issues including language, land, health, and education. It was adopted by UN members in 2007, with Canada—under then Prime Minister Harper—voting against. Subsequently the new federal Liberal government has formally endorsed the charter.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission collected the testimony of thousands of surviving students of Residential Schools and recorded the physical, psychological and sexual abuse that was experienced by so many. And it is estimated that more than 6,000 children died in the schools.

The Commission issued a series of sweeping recommendations in areas like health care, education, justice, language and commemoration to start the reconciliation process and to address the historic racism in a process involving all sectors of Canadian society.

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