

Indigenous Rights

Regardless of whether it's the Liberals or Conservatives that are in power, Indigenous people have not been treated fairly for generations. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the impact of problems like overcrowded housing conditions and the lack of clean water in many Indigenous communities all too clear.

Despite promises to honour Indigenous sovereignty, there are serious flaws with the way the federal government relates to Indigenous people. Infrastructure projects are still being run through traditional and unceded territories, like the Coastal GasLink pipeline. Aggressive raids are being conducted by the RCMP, like on the peaceful Wet'suwet'en land defenders. Inaction by the current Liberal government allowed Mi'kmaw fishers to be verbally and physically harassed when the Sipekne'katik First Nation launched its treaty fishery. Political decisions have always come at the expense of Indigenous communities.

When shipments of COVID-19 vaccines started arriving in Canada, the federal government prioritized getting vaccines to reserves and remote populations. But the vaccine rollout has not been a complete success due to mistrust, misinformation, and vaccine hesitancy.

In May 2021 the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation reported that the remains of 215 children were discovered at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. In June, Cowessess First Nation discovered 751 unmarked graves near the Marieval Indian Residential School grounds in Saskatchewan. These are not isolated incidents and it's expected that thousands more graves have yet to be discovered.

Liberal

2 years after the commissioners issued their 231 calls for justice in the final report of the national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) removed themselves from drafting a national action plan to implement the calls of the inquiry. NWAC said it had, "lost confidence in the federal government and is done with its 'toxic, dysfunctional' process" ([CTV News](#)).

The Liberal platform has the most in-depth section on Indigenous issues out of all parties. It contains promises for funds to continue existing projects and to undertake new ones. The Liberals have failed to meet 2 of their deadlines to lift all boil water advisories on reserves. There are currently 50 boil water advisories in effect in 31 communities.

Conservative

The Conservative platform only mentions the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Justice once and it's a promise to implement Calls 71 to 76, saying nothing about a commitment to the remaining 88 Calls. Most of the section of the platform on Indigenous issues focuses on job creation and supporting Indigenous business owners. On the

campaign trail, Conservative leader Erin O'Toole stated, "Indigenous peoples would be better served economically if they stopped protesting." ([Winnipeg Free Press](#)).

Intense opposition from Conservatives in the Senate caused Bill C-262 to die in 2019, preventing it from becoming law. Bill C-262 represented an attempt to have Canada align its laws with the global minimum human rights standards for Indigenous peoples (UNDRIP). A revised version of the bill (Bill C-15) was eventually passed in 2021.

NDP

The first promise regarding Indigenous rights in the NDP platform is to fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. The NDP promises to find all unmarked graves at former residential school sites and prosecute those responsible for committing the atrocities.

All the NDP's proposals promise to work with Indigenous communities. Other promises include properly funding Indigenous run child welfare system, and access to healthcare and education. They also commit to implementing a co-developed, fully-funded Indigenous National Housing Strategy within their first 100 days in office. Their platform also promises to lift all boil water advisories and implement the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Green

The Green Party structures its platform promises around land claims, nation-to-nation relationships, cultural revitalization and healing, and health and wellness. A running theme through their platform is the promise of reconciliation through nation-to-nation engagement. They also promise to implement the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The Green Party promises to fund initiatives that Indigenous groups identify as required to return to a new reality after COVID-19. It promises to increase government support to Indigenous people living off reserves, and to improve food security in northern communities.

Conclusion

Reconciliation is essential if we want a Canada that reflects the values we hold as Canadians. If we want reconciliation, we need to vote for the party that will best meet Canada's obligations to Indigenous people. And, as history has shown, we must stay engaged with Indigenous issues after the election and keep pressure on the government to ensure they act on their promises.

