

New Democrats outline 7-point Aboriginal platform

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

WINNIPEG, Sept 29/08 – 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.