

April 20, 2021

## BACKGROUND

### **Funding supports work with First Nations to advance reconciliation**

Budget 2021 provides funding across government for work between the Province and Indigenous peoples to advance reconciliation, ensure Indigenous peoples can fully participate in economic recovery and continue to work together to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

Budget 2021 adds \$60 million in annual base funding to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, which will provide dedicated funding that supports Indigenous participation in land and resource activities, negotiations and engagement on legislation, policy and programs. Stable funding is vitally important to advance reconciliation consistent with the Declaration Act and will enhance the relationships and collaborative work between the Province, First Nations and industry.

New positions in key ministries will be added through Budget 2021 to ensure the necessary staff are in place to carry out the work to implement reconciliation agreements that the Province and First Nations have signed together, including land transfers, as well as to implement the Declaration Act. Budget 2021 includes \$6 million per year to support 30 new positions in the ministries of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

Budget 2021 continues critical investments in skills and training to support Indigenous peoples to access programs to prepare for new employment opportunities in high demand jobs. This includes \$17 million in 2021-22, building on previous investments in the StrongerBC Economic Recovery Plan and Budget 2020.

The Indigenous Community Skills Training and Education program received \$15 million to enable more than 1,000 Indigenous peoples whose employment was affected by COVID-19 to access skills training and education programs.

An additional \$20 million in new funding is being provided for the Aboriginal Head Start program, which provides no-fee, culturally relevant child care for Indigenous families.

Budget 2021 includes \$59 million to support culturally safe health services for Indigenous peoples, which is critical to ensuring equal access to the health care system and promoting health and well-being. This includes \$14 million for the First Nations Health Authority to deliver targeted mental health and addictions services for Indigenous peoples throughout B.C. and a further \$45 million over three years to implement recommendations of the In Plain Sight report by providing additional cultural safety and humility training and Indigenous liaisons within the health authorities.

In addition to the budget, the Fall 2020 StrongerBC Economic Recovery Plan included significant funding to advance reconciliation and build a more inclusive economy, including:

- The Connecting British Columbia program and the Government of Canada's Universal Broadband Fund will provide \$4.5 million to improve cellular service on Highway 16 from Prince Rupert to Prince George, fulfilling a critical recommendation to make the highway safer and help prevent violence against Indigenous women and girls.
- \$5 million to help local Indigenous tourism businesses through the BC Indigenous Tourism Recovery Fund, part of a cross-government effort to help all aspects of the tourism industry.
- Rural Economic Recovery grants (\$20 million) includes funding for Indigenous and local governments to support immediate job creation through construction.
- \$1.9 million for the Anti-Racism Restart and Recovery program to connect communities with information, supports and training to respond to, and prevent incidents of racism and hate.
- Environmental efforts include funding to assist communities, First Nations and tour operators clean up B.C.'s shorelines (\$14.8 million) and about 70 watershed and wetland initiatives (\$27 million) to ensure B.C.'s water stays healthy and resilient in a changing climate.

Overdose response and awareness efforts in rural, remote and Indigenous communities will be supported through \$1 million in prevention grants. This builds on 2020-21 investments of \$2.3 million to expand life-saving interventions and mental health care for First Nations and Métis youth, and post-secondary students. A rural, remote and Indigenous COVID-19 framework was established to ensure people have access to the health care they need.

## **Reconciliation in action**

The Province and Indigenous peoples have continued to build the foundations for a shared vision of self-determining, healthy and prosperous Indigenous communities in B.C.

First Nations are receiving a 7% annual share in provincial gaming revenue from a long-term agreement signed in September 2020. This agreement is expected to provide B.C. First Nations with as much as \$3 billion over 25 years, providing funding for long-term investment in services their communities need.

Through the Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund, the Province is investing \$550 million over 10 years to build 1,750 homes for Indigenous peoples, whether they live on- or off-reserve. Nearly 1,100 new affordable homes are complete or underway, including close to 360 homes on-reserve, making B.C. the first province in Canada to invest provincial housing funds into on-reserve housing.

The BC First Nations Justice Strategy, signed with the BC First Nations Justice Council in March 2020, is part of government's collaborative work to improve Indigenous peoples' experience within the justice system. B.C. is also working with the council to create Indigenous justice centres, and announced funding in September 2020 to build the University of Victoria's National Centre for Indigenous Laws.

Government is committed to lasting relationships with Indigenous peoples and has made progress through a number of new long-term agreements in 2019-20, including the Lake Babine Foundation Agreement and Coastal First Nations Memorandum of Understanding for Reconciliation Protocol 2.0.

Indigenous peoples living in urban areas are receiving increased supports to meet the challenges of the pandemic through \$7.8 million in funding for Aboriginal friendship centres, helping assist individuals, young families, single parents, youth and Elders through a mix of in-person and online services.

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