

Reponses to the Nuuchah-nulth Nations questionnaire from Dallas Smith, BC Liberal Candidate for North Island

- 1. The William/Tsilhqot'in decision changed the landscape in terms of Aboriginal Title and Rights in BC and across Canada, what are you and your party committed to doing to ensure that Aboriginal Title and Rights are respected, recognized, and implemented?**

Today's BC Liberals are commitment to province-wide reconciliation, and also reconciliation on a nation-to-nation basis. The annual First Nation's Leader's Gathering with the Premier and Cabinet served as a forum for broader dialogue on a range of issues of shared concern including economic development, education, and social welfare.

We believe working in partnership is the best way to provide a meaningful role in land and resource management for First Nations, and to provide for benefit sharing and economic opportunities. That's also why we encourage industry proponents to engage with First Nations early to provide better opportunities to address concerns and increase the likelihood of successful and timely consultation results.

- 2. While many First Nations still prefer to negotiate, what are you and your party committed to do to ensure that negotiations of treaties, agreements or other constructive arrangements occur in the Province of BC?**

In partnership with First Nations, Today's BC Liberals will continue to work towards meaningful reconciliation. In Canada, the BC Liberal government has been leading this work collaboratively with First Nations to improve quality of life for Aboriginal people through new economic partnerships, resource development revenue sharing, and closing gaps in health, education, skills training, and employment. As a result of our collective efforts, the Province and First Nations have achieved close to 500 economic and reconciliation agreements over the last decade; nearly 400 in the past five years.

Today's BC Liberals understand that pursuing economic development and reconciliation with First Nations in British Columbia go hand in hand.

- 3. What are you and your party committed to doing in terms of implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released their 94 "Calls to Action?"**

Today's BC Liberals will work in partnership with the Government of Canada and First Nations as we move past the Indian Act as part of the federal government's plan to implement UNDRIP. The federal government recognizes that there are some challenges to implementing the declaration and the BC Liberal government is ready to work with Canada and First Nations as these challenges are addressed. We are proud of the relationships we have built with First Nations over the years, reaching close to 500 economic and reconciliation agreements - nearly 400 of those since 2013. This approach, plus our continued involvement in the Treaty process for those Nations who wish to explore Treaty, provides First Nations with a path forward to reconciliation.

4. What are you and your party committed to doing to ensure there is action taken to address the issue so of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls?

BC Liberals commit to leading and supporting actions to end violence against Indigenous women and girls. Our government has been clear that we support a national inquiry, and look forward to sharing the learnings and progress from our own Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

In British Columbia, work is now substantively completed or underway on all of the major themes of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry final report - compensation, improvements to policing, safety for vulnerable women, supports for missing persons. We have also made significant progress to increase safety along northern highways.

In 2015, our government introduced a new \$6.4 million plan to enhance safety along Highway 16. This followed extensive consultation with more than 80 First Nations and local government leaders and the November 2015 Transportation Symposium in Smithers. The plan includes dedicated funding for transit along the corridor, community vehicle purchases, First Nations driver training and more webcams & transit shelters. We're also committed to ensuring that existing services are used more efficiently. The first buses started running on transit routes earlier this year. In March, we doubled the budget for community vehicles and awarded grants to 12 northern BC communities and organizations. Much progress has been made and there is more work ahead to further improve safety along Highway 16.

Additionally, in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside we have:

- Opened a 52-bed, women-only emergency shelter (Powell Place Women's Shelter);
- Increased funding for the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre to expand hours;
- Created spaces specifically for women and women with children who are at risk of violence; and
- Ensured priority placement for women fleeing violence to help them establish community, health and educational supports.

Today's BC Liberals are committed to advancing the safety of vulnerable women, in partnership with the anti-violence community sector, in profound ways. If re-elected, we will continue to help ensure that 'missing' never again means 'forsaken' in British Columbia.

5. First Nations Control of First Nations Education remains a priority for Nuuchah-nulth First Nations. What are you and your party committed to doing to ensure that the Province of BC advances First Nations Control of First Nations Education with BC First Nations?

We recognize there is a shared responsibility to First Nation youth to ensure that the gap that exists regarding access to education and other opportunities is closed permanently so that every young person in B.C. has the same advantages from a growing economy.

Educational outcomes for First Nations students have greatly improved over the past decade with more students completing high school, and more going on to post-secondary studies: high school completion rates for First Nation youth are up from 51.5% to 65% since 2001. However, there is more work to do and we are focusing on improving student outcomes for First Nation children to further close the gap for high school completion and post-secondary studies with non-First Nation students.

We are committed to supporting First Nations' involvement in the forest sector by tripling enrollment in the First Nations Forestry Technical Training Program by 2019. We will also support partnerships between First Nations and industry proponents for improved access to skills training and economic development opportunities.

Narrowing the gap means making the necessary investments at the provincial level and federal level. It means changing the curriculum for all B.C. students so they learn about First Nation history, culture, and traditions. And it means ensuring that the opportunity for a good paying, family supporting job exists in communities throughout British Columbia.

- 6. First Nations Child and Family Services remain in a crisis in the Province of BC, with over 50% of all children in care in BC being Aboriginal. Due to inadequate funding from both the provincial and federal governments, the issue still remains at the forefront for Nuuchahnulth First Nations. What are you and your party committed to do in terms of improving First Nations Child and Family Services in partnership with BC First Nations?**

Work to improve the lives of Indigenous children is both serious and urgent, and needs to be addressed in partnership with Aboriginal people and the federal government.

Our BC Liberal government initiated a new conversation on Indigenous child welfare by hosting the Children and Family Gathering in May 2016, a direct response to a commitment Premier Christy Clark made to have a province-wide discussion on how to better help support Indigenous children.

In 2014, Grand Chief Ed John of the First Nations Leadership Council was appointed special adviser to the Ministry of Children and Family Development to provide detailed analysis on Indigenous child welfare in B.C. His report, "Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification - From Root Causes to Root Solutions" was released in November 2016. Of the 85 recommendations made, approximately 40 are underway and the BC Liberals commit to seeing how the remainder can be actioned.

Additionally, with our partners at the First Nations Leadership Council and the federal government, we have created a working group focused on addressing policy, programs and legislative frameworks related to children and families. We are currently developing a joint terms of reference with our partners to serve as a guiding document.

If re-elected, we will increase the number of First Nation staff in the Ministry of Children & Families and ensure that all staff are provided training regarding individual First Nation identities and cultures. We will also focus on improving permanency planning and cultural connections for First Nation children and youth in care. All British Columbian children deserve a bright future and it is our collective responsibility to help provide them opportunities to lead healthy, happy lives.

- 7. Although some believe that emergency services are the jurisdiction of the federal government for on-reserve emergencies, Nuuchahnulth First Nations believe the Province plays a critical role in emergency response, management and preparedness. What are you and your party committed to do to address emergency response and preparedness with Nuuchahnulth Nations?**

Since the BC Liberal government introduced the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative in 2004, \$78 million has been allocated help local governments and First Nations significantly reduce wildfire risks

around their communities. To date, 298 Community Wildfire Protection Plans have been completed by local governments and First Nations. Another 56 are in progress. Projects include conventional harvesting; prescribed burning; improving the spacing between live trees; removing dead trees; and cleaning up low branches, needles and wood debris that could potentially fuel a fire. Completed fuel treatments and risk reduction efforts from all projects currently covers about 90,000 hectares of land in and around communities that face a significant wildfire risk.

In March 2017, the BC Liberal government also announced a \$7.5 million commitment to upgrade BC Wildfire Service facilities throughout the province as part of our Rural Economic Development Strategy.

Our government has finalized an agreement with Indigenous & Northern Affairs Canada for Emergency Management BC (EMBC) to deliver emergency planning and preparedness to on reserve communities – the same services non-indigenous local governments receive. To accomplish this, EMBC has hired additional staff focusing on consultation and support for First Nations and complementing our existing operational capacity. We sincerely hope that the First Nations Leadership Council signs this agreement in the near future so this important work can get underway.

In addition, our government has committed to forming a working group with the FNLC and the First Nations Emergency Services Society. When the agreement is in place, the working group will be able to help nations develop Emergency Plans to keep their communities safe. The BC Liberals look forward to establishing equal levels of support for emergency preparedness for all communities throughout BC, both indigenous and non-indigenous.

8. BC's Ministry of Transportation plays an important role when it applies to road access for our First Nations. Are you committed to lobby and promote the paving of roads in and out of our remote/rural communities? (i.e. paving and improvements to communities such as Bamfield, Nitnaht, Zeballos and Fair Harbour etc.)

We've invested almost \$20 billion in critical transportation infrastructure across our province since the BC NDP was in power. However, there is more work to do which is why Budget 2017 provides \$3.2 billion in additional transportation infrastructure spending over the next three years.

Included in this are highway improvement projects such as the recently-announced upgrades to Highway 4 West of Port Alberni. The project will widen and straighten a 1.5 kilometre stretch of highway presently known for its 30 kilometre/hour speed advisory, sharp curves and poor sight lines. The total cost for the project is \$27 million.

As committed to in our Ten Year transportation plan, "B.C. On the Move," we have also increased the budget by 33% for improvements to side roads throughout B.C. Side roads connect rural residents to communities, provide industry with access to resource roads and enable tourists to visit destinations throughout the province. A safe and reliable provincial highway and side-road network is essential to the continued growth and development of B.C.'s communities. Examples of projects include \$6 million for bridge projects in 2016 on San Josef Road west of Port Hardy and Eve River Bridge on Highway 19, north of Sayward.

Reducing poverty remains a critical element to improving the life of First Nations people in BC. What are you and your party committed to do in terms of developing a provincial poverty reduction strategy and implementing it?

Today's BC Liberals know that the most effective way to reduce poverty is to create jobs and opportunity through a strong economy. And we've done exactly that – leading Canada with over 222,000 new jobs since 2011. Today's BC Liberals have reduced the number of people dependent on income and disability assistance by 59,000 (24%) since 2001.

BC has some of the most comprehensive supports for low-income individuals and their families in Canada, including subsidized housing, child-care subsidies, dental and optical care for children, free MSP and Pharmacare, child and seniors benefits, and employment services.

We have recently provided \$10 million to Food Banks BC to help foodbanks throughout BC distribute fresh, healthy food to those in need. A significant portion of this funding will be used to add refrigeration capacity for food banks in B.C., giving vulnerable families have more consistent access to a greater variety of nutritious foods. This funding builds on the Provincial Farmers' Food Donation Tax Credit, which is designed to connect families needing food supports with healthy, fresh food by encouraging food producers and farmers to donate fresh vegetables, meat, grain and dairy to local foodbanks and charities.

We are also increasing funding by \$6 million annually for the BC Healthy Kids Program to include coverage for hearing aids and improve rates for dental services for children. Almost \$23 million a year is currently invested in the program which provides dental care and prescription eyewear to children living in low-income families. About 166,000 low and moderate-income families are eligible for Healthy Kids supports.

To help communities address the root causes of poverty at the local level, Today's BC Liberals are investing \$7 million for a new Community Poverty Reduction Fund that will support community-driven programs tailored to the unique circumstances and needs of each region. The fund will be administered by the Vancouver Foundation and support initiatives such as developing local strategies to reduce poverty, growing local partnerships and launching poverty reduction pilot projects that are either innovative or proving successful in other jurisdictions.

Just as importantly, we're making record investments in skills training and programs like the Single Parent Employment Initiative to get people out of poverty and into training and work. 92% of participants in this program are single mothers and, so far, we've helped 4,400 moms and dads get off social assistance.

Today's BC Liberals will continue to invest in the success of the Single Parent Employment Initiative with a goal of having 10,000 single parents apply for the program and 5,000 starting jobs. We will also develop a Low Income Families in Transition (LIFT) pilot program that will provide temporary assistance to low-income single working parents so they can take time away from their current employment, or reduce their hours without financial penalty, and assist with training, childcare and transit costs while upgrading or acquiring new skills.

Moving forward, Today's BC Liberals will continue to focus our efforts on growing the economy, creating jobs, and investing in targeted supports for families that need them.

9. Nuu-chah-nulth communities have been devastated over the past several years in terms of mental health and addictions. What are you and your party committed to do to address mental health and addictions?

Today's BC Liberals are committed to providing the best supports for people facing challenges associated with mental illness and problematic substance use, and have made it a priority to build a comprehensive system of these services throughout the province. Our government spends about \$1.5 billion per year in mental health and substance use services, including programs for children and youth. There was a time when those with mental health and substance use problems would be forced to suffer in silence because of the shame and stigma associated with these treatable disorders. While we're making progress to prevent, treat and support people on their path to recovery, there is always more to do.

This is one of the reasons we moved to secure a new, long-lasting funding agreement with the federal government that will invest new money into critical mental health supports across the country. Today's BC Liberal's will work with the federal government to begin flowing these additional investments as quickly as possible so British Columbians have easy and effective access to these programs and treatment options.

10. Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations want to ensure that resources taken out of their Ha'wiih Hahoulthee (hereditary chiefs territories) is done to the highest environmental and sustainable standards, while also ensuring that benefits such as revenue, jobs creation and decision making stay within both Nuu-chah-nulth and non-Indigenous/British Columbians within that specific electoral district. How will you and your party ensure this happens for the betterment of all British Columbians?

Responsible resource development means welcoming investment and job creation in British Columbia. It means respecting environmental processes and not opposing new projects out of hand. Today's BC Liberal plan means resource development done the British Columbia way – with strict environmental review processes and strong monitoring once in operation. British Columbia has clear, rigorous environmental standards, ensuring decisions are made consistently and fairly to balance the needs of industry while protecting our environment.

Today's BC Liberals believe that economic opportunities are a central part of reconciliation with B.C. First Nations. The Province helps facilitate economic activity, job creation and enhanced social well-being by negotiating agreements with First Nations, and by supporting business development and cultural initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities for Aboriginal people. The Province and First Nations have achieved more than 500 economic and reconciliation agreements, more than 400 of those in the past five years.

11. Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations want to ensure that there is a government-to-government relationship between our First Nations and the Government of British Columbia in terms of management. What are you and your party committed to do to ensure this occurs?

Today's BC Liberals are commitment to province-wide reconciliation, and also reconciliation on a nation-to-nation basis. The annual First Nation's Leader's Gathering with the Premier and Cabinet serves as a forum for broader dialogue on a range of issues of shared concern including economic development, education, and social welfare.

As government, we will continue to work at the government-to-government level to help improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people through new economic partnerships, resource development revenue sharing, and closing gaps in health, education, skills training, and employment.