



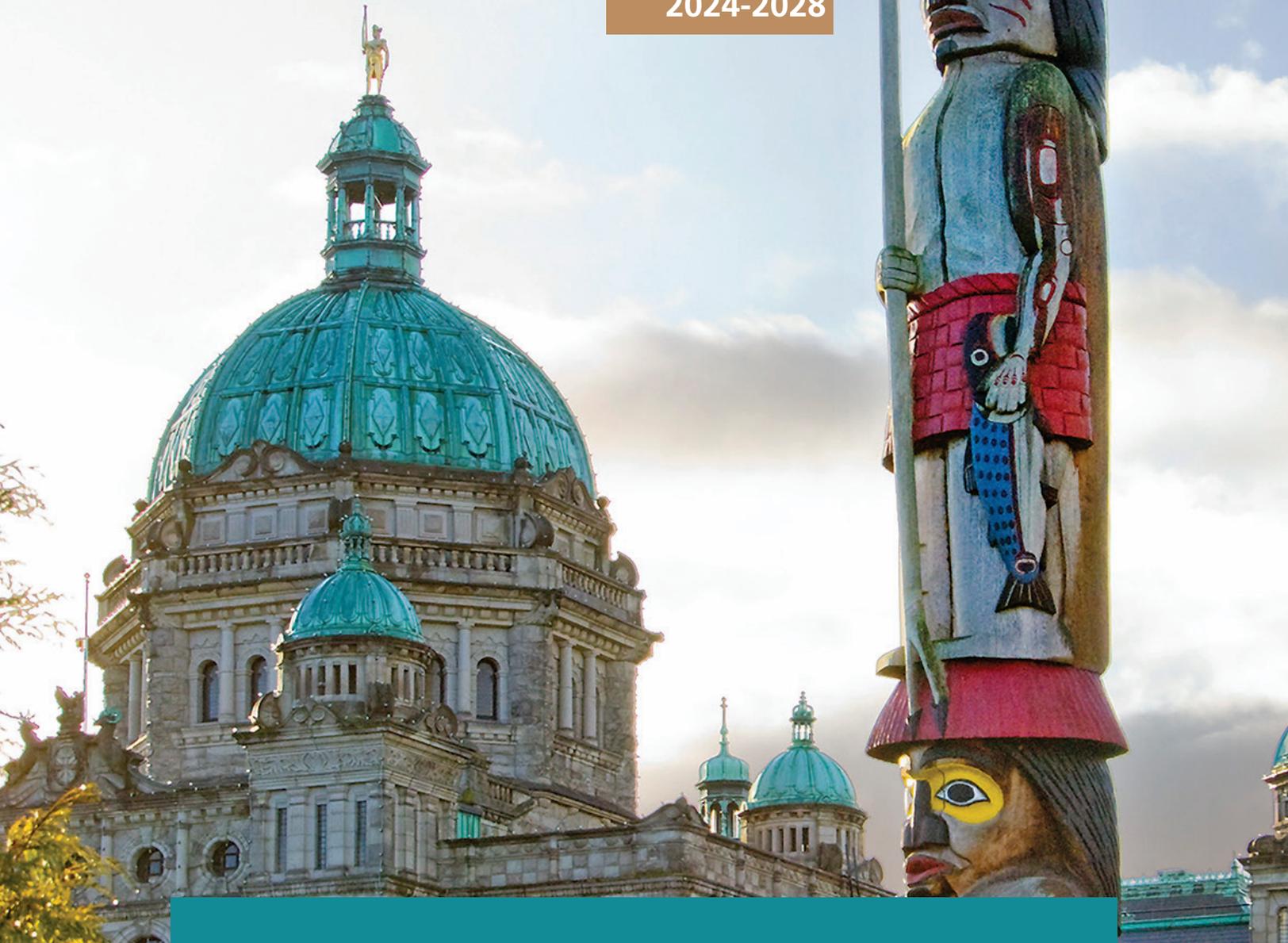
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

RECONCILIATION

ACTION PLAN

2024-2028



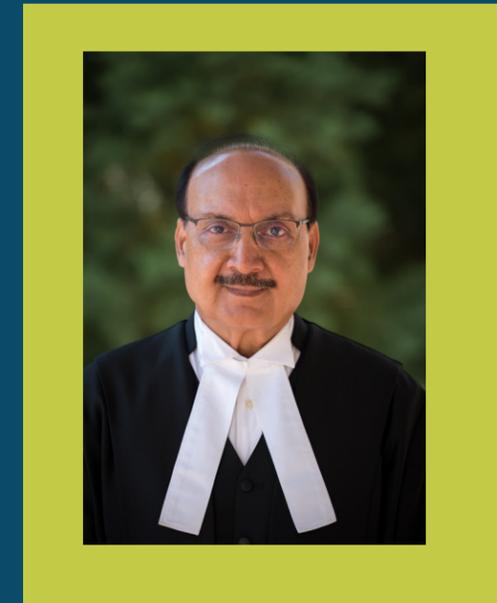
həysx^wqə siém THANK YOU

The Legislative Precinct, including the Parliament Buildings, other buildings, and surrounding grounds, are located on the traditional territory of the lək^wəŋən Peoples, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. The Legislative Assembly has benefitted, and continues to benefit, from the use of these lands which have a long history and significance to the lək^wəŋən Peoples, serving as a hunting and gathering ground, a trading hub, and a point for canoe portage. The Legislative Assembly is grateful to the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations for their continuing relationship with this land, for their enduring stewardship of their territory, and for generously sharing their friendship, wisdom, culture, and traditions.



MESSAGE FROM

THE SPEAKER



I am pleased to present the Legislative Assembly's first Reconciliation Action Plan. This plan sets out the commitments that will guide our institution's reconciliation planning and actions for the next four years and is the result of extensive engagement externally with Indigenous leaders from across the province, and internally with Members and staff of the Legislative Assembly.

Promoting inclusivity has been a tenet of my life's work. As an immigrant to British Columbia and the first person of South Asian heritage to serve as the Speaker of any legislature in Canada, I recognize the value of seeing oneself represented in the institutions that surround us. As Speaker, it is my priority to make the Legislative Assembly more reflective of all people in our province. Every person who visits this building should feel that they are welcome, and that they belong here. Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is an essential part of this work.

Over the last four years, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, it has been my honour to begin building a new relationship with First Nations leaders, both in Victoria and throughout the province. What we heard repeatedly on our visits to First Nations communities is that reconciliation requires more than just words; it demands concrete actions. I have been especially grateful to the members of my Indigenous Reconciliation Advisory Committee for their thoughtful guidance and support as we work to translate good intentions into tangible progress.

I have also been grateful for the collaborative spirit demonstrated by many of my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly. As the 42nd Parliament nears a close, it is my wholehearted belief that the commitments outlined in this plan are a worthy legacy that will strengthen our institution. With the release of this Reconciliation Action Plan, the Legislative Assembly is also leading the way for legislatures across Canada. We are proud to be the first jurisdiction to release a plan of this nature, and I hope that this initiative will inspire other legislatures to take similar steps towards reconciliation.

It is important to acknowledge that true reconciliation is not achieved through a single act, but rather through ongoing commitment and concerted effort. The release of this Reconciliation Action Plan signifies an important initial step, yet it is only the beginning of a journey. We must remain dedicated to fostering dialogue, understanding, and meaningful engagement within our institution and with Indigenous Peoples. It is only then that we will enact lasting change, and advance reconciliation from rhetoric to reality.

Hon. Raj Chouhan
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Purpose

This Reconciliation Action Plan outlines the commitments and actions the Legislative Assembly will undertake to contribute towards reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. The plan recognizes the need to address historical injustices by acknowledging the past and working to build new relationships with Indigenous Peoples based on respect and understanding. In developing a Reconciliation Action Plan, the Legislative Assembly is committed to reconciliation as a core value to guide its multi-year planning.

To develop the Reconciliation Action Plan, the Speaker, the Honourable Raj Chouhan, supported by the Clerk, Kate Ryan-Lloyd, engaged directly with First Nations communities and leaders to listen to and learn from their perspectives. The message was clear: reconciliation requires action. As such, the plan outlines specific actions that the Legislative Assembly will undertake to promote and include Indigenous cultures, languages,

traditions, and representation within our institution and its proceedings.

This plan is not a static document to sit on a shelf, but a living document that will evolve with further input and dialogue. In the spirit of true collaboration, the Legislative Assembly will continue to engage and collaborate with Indigenous Peoples as it develops and takes specific actions to implement each of the plan's commitments.

This Reconciliation Action Plan is an important first step, but it is only the beginning of the Legislative Assembly's reconciliation journey. By working alongside Indigenous Peoples to act on its commitments, the plan aims to serve as a catalyst for positive change in support of an inclusive and representative Legislative Assembly.

ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are responsible for passing laws, authorizing provincial government spending, and holding the provincial government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly is distinct from the executive branch of government, including the Premier and Ministers (known formally as the Executive Council), and the provincial ministries, that sets and implements provincial policies. The executive branch of government has nation-to-nation obligations with Indigenous Peoples, as well as those set out in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and the Declaration Act Action Plan.

MLAs represent their constituents in debates, giving voice to the concerns and views of people from across the province. MLAs are supported by staff both in their parliamentary work as part of the Legislative Assembly and in their representative work at offices in their constituencies, where they assist British Columbians in their interactions with the provincial government.

The Legislative Assembly is supported by non-partisan employees of the Legislative Assembly Administration. These employees enable the parliamentary process and provide the services necessary for MLAs and their staff to fulfill their responsibilities.

Why Reconciliation is Important for the Legislative Assembly

In recent years, people have come to better understand British Columbia's dark history in its relationships with its original inhabitants. Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is part of our collective responsibility as we seek to better understand and move forward from this history.

In British Columbia, the executive branch of government typically leads reconciliation through relationship-building with Indigenous Peoples, including negotiating modern treaties and agreements with First Nations and the federal government. Its efforts are guided by the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), unanimously adopted by the Legislative Assembly in 2019, which enshrined the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the government's framework for reconciliation.

While DRIPA does not formally place obligations on the Legislative Assembly, this plan takes inspiration from its objectives, recognizing that the Legislative Assembly has its own, important role to play in reconciliation.

Most directly, the Legislative Assembly considers legislation to enact or amend treaties or agreements with First Nations, as well as other legislation and provincial spending that impacts Indigenous Peoples. Building trust and ensuring that Indigenous Peoples feel included in and represented by the Legislative Assembly, through reconciliation efforts, is critical to the Legislative Assembly's role as a representative democratic institution.

In doing so, the Legislative Assembly seeks to demonstrate leadership among other legislative institutions within Canada and beyond, and to emerge a stronger institution.

Looking Back to Move Forward

In reflecting on the history of the Legislative Assembly, it is important to recognize the province in 2024 is much different than when its first Members were elected in 1871, shortly after British Columbia joined Confederation. Societal values, norms, and awareness have evolved over time, and are important to keep in mind when considering the actions of previous Members. It is also necessary to recognize the significant harms that the actions of the Legislative Assembly caused for First Nations. Many historical debates were racist and discriminatory, and First Nations were prohibited from voting or standing as candidates, thereby excluding them from the Legislative Assembly, including from decisions that impacted their lives and communities.

Building a shared understanding of this past is critical for the Legislative Assembly to heal relationships with First Nations and to move forward with reconciliation. This is why the Legislative Assembly undertook a research project

compiling the decisions and debates related to First Nations during the institution's first 100 years. The Reconciliation Action Plan is released in conjunction with a research publication, titled, "First Nations and the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia: A Record of Historic Actions, Decisions and Statements in Legislative Proceedings, 1872-1972," which includes 874 records.

These records reveal an effort to control "Indians" (the word used at the time) to allow for the settlement and development of British Columbia by non-First Nations. The records also show that the views and values of Members evolve over the century, spurred on by the election of Dr. Frank Calder in 1949, as the first Indigenous Member of the Legislative Assembly. This research is expected to raise understanding within our institution and is accessible to researchers, educators, and people who want to know more about this important history.

UNIQUE IMPACT UNIQUE RESPONSIBILITY

The decisions and debates related to Indigenous Peoples during the Legislative Assembly's first 100 years had a unique impact upon the original inhabitants of the province, the First Nations with territory in what is now called British Columbia. The Legislative Assembly recognizes its responsibility to acknowledge this truth and take specific actions to reconcile with First Nations.

As the Legislative Assembly looks forward, it recognizes the importance of being inclusive and representative of all Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia today, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Opportunities for engagement and relationship-building with First Nations communities and organizations representing Métis and Inuit peoples is an important component of implementing the Reconciliation Action Plan.

Becoming a More Inclusive and Representative Institution

The Legislative Assembly has made some initial efforts to incorporate Indigenous cultures throughout the Legislative Precinct. There are several Indigenous objects and pieces of artwork in the Parliament Buildings, including a hand-carved red cedar canoe presented as a gift by British Columbia's first Indigenous Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Steven Point, a woven Salish Blanket, and a traditional Talking Stick positioned in the Legislative Chamber adjacent to the Speaker's chair. Prominent plaques featuring the Ləkʷəŋən-language were recently unveiled in front of the Parliament Buildings. Elders from the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and staff from the Legislative Assembly worked together to write and design the signage, which recognizes the continuing relationships the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations share with the land on which the Legislative Precinct is located.

In recent years, the Legislative Assembly has also been honoured to receive blessings from Elders from the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations at the openings of new Sessions of

Parliament. At the opening of the most recent Session, the Vice-Regal Procession entered the Chamber accompanied by the Ləkʷəŋən Traditional Singers and Dancers, weaving for the first time Indigenous and non-Indigenous customs and symbolism into our existing parliamentary traditions. These new ceremonial components reflect the evolving, modern-day relationship between the Crown, the Legislative Assembly, and Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia.

These reconciliation efforts build upon the work undertaken by non-partisan employees of the Legislative Assembly Administration. In 2022, the Administration developed a reconciliation discussion paper outlining how it could support the Legislative Assembly's reconciliation journey. In addition to leading the implementation of many of the actions included in the Reconciliation Action Plan, employees also participate in mandatory reconciliation training and an employee committee leads several initiatives to further reconciliation within the Administration.

TIMELINE

The Legislative Assembly has taken some initial steps to strengthen its relationship with Indigenous Peoples and represent the diversity of Indigenous cultures in British Columbia. While these mark important first efforts, there is much more to be done to advance meaningful reconciliation.

1998

Chief Joseph Gosnell enters the Parliament Buildings through the Ceremonial Entrance, reserved for heads of state, to address the Legislative Assembly as it considered the Nisga'a Final Agreement Act. Since that time, more than 20 Indigenous representatives have made special addresses to the Legislative Assembly when it is considering legislation or changes to agreements that will impact their Nations and communities.

2007

A settlement agreement is reached with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the governments of British Columbia and Canada to resolve a claim of infringement of historic treaty rights with respect to the Legislative Precinct lands.

2008

A set of murals in the Lower Rotunda of the Parliament Buildings that portrayed offensive and historically inaccurate images of First Nations are permanently covered.

2016

The Ring of Reconciliation is added to the Black Rod by Prince William, embodying the relationship of the Crown and the Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia.

2016

A substantial portion of Indigenous text is included in the official transcript of the Legislative Assembly's proceedings for the first time.

2016

A Talking Stick, carved by the late James Delorme of the Songhees Nation, is presented to the Speaker, the Honourable Linda Reid, by Elders from the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. The Talking Stick is prominently positioned in the Legislative Chamber adjacent to the Speaker's chair.

2019

The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* is unanimously adopted by the Legislative Assembly.

2021

A framed orange shirt is installed in the Parliament Buildings to commemorate the victims of Indian Residential Schools, following a ceremony with Eddy Charlie and Kristin Spray of Orange Shirt Day Victoria.

2022

The Legislative Assembly Administration produces a discussion paper on how the non-partisan support staff can support the institution's reconciliation journey.

2023

Ləkʷəŋən-language welcome plaques are installed in the front of the Parliament Buildings.

2024

New ceremonial components featuring Ləkʷəŋən traditions are incorporated into the opening of the 5th session of the 42nd Parliament.

Engagement and Outreach



Visit to Sto:lo Nation

The commitments and initial actions included in this Reconciliation Action Plan are shaped by the input received directly from Indigenous Peoples through significant engagement and outreach, led by the Speaker on behalf of the Legislative Assembly.

In May 2023, the Speaker established for the first time a Speaker’s Indigenous Reconciliation Advisory Committee to receive guidance directly from Indigenous leaders on how the Legislative Assembly could most meaningfully engage with Indigenous Peoples and advance reconciliation.

In its first year, the committee included four Indigenous leaders reflecting a diversity of views and experiences:

- Taylor Baker, Executive Councillor for Tsawwassen First Nation;
- Howard Grant (qiyəplenəx^w), Councillor for Musqueam Indian Band;
- Chief David Jimmie (Lenéx wí :ót), Squiala First Nation; and
- Chief Willie Sellars, Williams Lake First Nation.



Visit to Musqueam Indian Band

The advisory committee met regularly with the Speaker and Clerk and has been instrumental in shaping the Legislative Assembly’s engagement and reconciliation efforts over the past year, as well as building awareness and support among Indigenous Peoples for this work.

The advisory committee made it clear that it was important for the Speaker and Clerk, as representatives of the Legislative Assembly, to visit Indigenous Peoples in their communities to communicate the institution’s commitment to reconciliation and to meet with leaders and community members.



Visit to Tla’amin Nation

As such, the Speaker, supported by the Clerk, began a Speaker’s Listening Tour to visit several First Nations communities throughout the province to build new relationships with Indigenous leaders and listen to

their perspectives on reconciliation and the Legislative Assembly. Many visits coincided with important days, such as National Indigenous Peoples Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, as well as with important cultural days and celebrations.

In addition, the Speaker and Clerk received input from the First Nations Leadership Council and worked to strengthen the Legislative Assembly’s special relationships with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, culminating in the joint designing and unveiling of prominent plaques featuring the Ləkʷəŋən-language in front of the Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker and Clerk also canvassed the perspectives of the Legislative Assembly’s Members. In particular, the Indigenous Members of the 42nd Parliament—Melanie Mark, Adam Olsen, Joan Phillip, and Ellis Ross—provided important guidance and support for this work, as have Members of the Legislative Assembly Management Committee, which oversees the administration and operations of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker and Clerk, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, offer sincere gratitude to everyone who shared their time and ideas. In particular, the Speaker and Clerk are grateful for the candid and thoughtful input received from members of the Speaker’s Indigenous Reconciliation Advisory Committee and representatives of Musqueam Indian Band, Tla’amin Nation, Williams Lake First Nation, Tsawwassen First Nation, Sto:lo Nation, and Osoyoos Indian Band.



Visit to Williams Lake First Nation



Visit to Osoyoos Indian Band



Visit to Tsawwassen First Nation

Our Foundation: A New Relationship



Building a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples is the foundation that guides the implementation of this Reconciliation Action Plan. In recognition of both our local and provincial impacts, the Legislative Assembly looks forward to strengthening its relationships with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations while seeking to deepen its relationships with Indigenous Peoples across the entirety of British Columbia.

To bring the Reconciliation Action Plan's commitments to life, the Legislative Assembly will:

Continue to engage with the Speaker's Indigenous Reconciliation Advisory Committee, with a renewed membership and mandate.

The Speaker's Indigenous Reconciliation Advisory Committee is an opportunity to ensure a diversity of Indigenous perspectives are represented as the Legislative Assembly pursues its reconciliation journey. Building on the success of the initial term of the Committee, a formal process will be developed for renewing the Committee's membership to ensure diverse representation and renewing the Committee's terms of reference to focus on implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan.

Develop a framework for regular engagements with Indigenous leadership organizations, including the First Nations Leadership Council.

Maintaining regular and consistent dialogue with Indigenous leadership organizations is an important part of developing meaningful relationships. The Legislative Assembly will engage with Indigenous leadership organizations on a regular basis to seek guidance and share information on the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan.

Continue the Speaker's Listening Tour to meet with and hear from Indigenous Peoples directly in their communities.

The Speaker will visit First Nations communities throughout the province and seek to also receive input from organizations representing Métis, Inuit, and urban Indigenous Peoples, to hear a broad range of perspectives of the Legislative Assembly. There is also a unique opportunity to establish stronger ties with Indigenous governments, including those with legislative bodies like ours. Just as the Legislative Assembly engages with legislatures from other jurisdictions in Canada and beyond, it can form closer ties with Indigenous governance bodies throughout British Columbia.

Our Commitments

The Legislative Assembly's *Reconciliation Action Plan, 2024-2028* sets out five commitments that will be the focus of our actions to advance meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples over the next four years.

Initial actions are included for each commitment and are informed by the Legislative Assembly's engagement efforts to date. The actions will be refreshed based on progress and further engagement and dialogue with Indigenous Peoples, Members, and staff.

UNDERSTANDING

Commitment #1: We will foster understanding of the historical role and actions of the Legislative Assembly and its role in reconciliation.

Some of the historical actions and decisions of the Legislative Assembly resulted in injustices for, and discrimination against, First Nations in British Columbia. First Nations were also systemically and intentionally excluded from participating in provincial democratic processes for much of our early institutional history. The first step in any reconciliation journey is to acknowledge the past and to take responsibility. In delivering an official apology directly to First Nations, the Legislative Assembly will take the opportunity to publicly communicate the truth about past actions and to express its commitment to build a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia.

INITIAL ACTION

1. Deliver an official apology, by the Speaker on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, to First Nations across British Columbia.

EDUCATION

Commitment #2: We will provide educational opportunities and resources to Members and staff to enhance understanding of Indigenous history and contemporary issues.

Through our orientation program and ongoing resources provided to Members, we aim to support Members to fulfill their many responsibilities as elected representatives in their constituencies, as well as in Victoria. This program may include resources focused on understanding Indigenous histories, governance systems and cultures, and exploring current issues such as Aboriginal rights and title, self-governance, and treaty making. Non-partisan staff of the Legislative Assembly Administration will continue to receive required “Reconciliation 101” training, as well as additional offerings to support further learning and reflection on their roles supporting reconciliation.

INITIAL ACTIONS

2. Offer core learning to all Members and staff on Indigenous histories and cultures, contemporary Indigenous issues, and effectively working with and representing First Nations.
3. Include reconciliation resources in the orientation program for Members of the 43rd Parliament, including on the Legislative Assembly’s commitment to reconciliation and additional resources for learning about, and strengthening relationships with, Indigenous Peoples.

INCLUSION

Commitment #3: We will review the rules, practices, and symbols of the Legislative Assembly to incorporate Indigenous cultures and participation.

Many of the Legislative Assembly’s customs and traditions trace their origin to the Westminster parliamentary system. Several parliamentary jurisdictions in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand incorporate Indigenous or other cultural adaptations into their traditions and proceedings to be more reflective of their histories, settings, and populations. As the Legislative Assembly continues to build a parliamentary culture that is unique to British Columbia, we will formalize some of our recent practices, such as ceremonial participation by Indigenous Elders and cultural groups. We will also look for ways to be more consistent in our inclusion of Indigenous leaders when considering laws relating to treaties or other agreements with First Nations, or other legislation that impacts Indigenous Peoples.

INITIAL ACTIONS

4. Seek opportunities to incorporate Indigenous customs and cultures into the rules, practices, and symbols of the Legislative Assembly.
5. Develop and implement consistent practices to provide for the participation of Indigenous representatives in Legislative Assembly ceremonies and proceedings.

REPRESENTATION

Commitment #4: We will ensure Indigenous cultures are reflected in the Parliament Buildings and throughout the Legislative Precinct.

The Legislative Assembly aspires to be welcoming and accessible so the public can learn about and engage in its work. It is important for all people in British Columbia, including Indigenous Peoples, to see themselves and their communities represented on the Legislative Precinct. The Parliament Buildings are also where many people learn about British Columbia's historical and contemporary governance. The Legislative Assembly will include stories of Indigenous governance and contributions to British Columbia in the Parliament Buildings and increase the representation of Indigenous cultures and communities throughout the Legislative Precinct.

INITIAL ACTION

6. Initiate a review of all public spaces and visitor programming to determine how and where Indigenous stories can be represented.

COMMEMORATION

Commitment #5: We will design and construct a monument in recognition of Indian Residential School survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities.

The Parliament Buildings and grounds of the Legislative Precinct are the most prominent symbol of provincial governance in British Columbia, and serve as a meeting place for celebration, activism, and for visitors. In recognition of the colonial policies that sought to destroy Indigenous cultures, and in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #82, we will work with the provincial government and Indigenous partners to commission a prominent monument on the Legislative Precinct that commemorates the tragic legacy of Indian Residential Schools in British Columbia and across Canada, and which encourages dialogue and reflection.

INITIAL ACTION

7. Develop a project plan for a Memorial Garden, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, including the Indian Residential School Survivors Society and Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

Implementation and Accountability

This Reconciliation Action Plan includes the commitments to which the Legislative Assembly will hold itself accountable, and to which we will expect to be held accountable by Indigenous Peoples and the public.

Further details on implementation of the initial and future actions will be developed based on continued engagement. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly will be mandated to implement the plan, ensuring all Members and staff have opportunities to support and participate in reconciliation activities and commitments.

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly will oversee implementation of the current and future actions included in the Reconciliation Action Plan with guidance from the Speaker's Indigenous Reconciliation Advisory Committee. Progress will be regularly and publicly reported to the Legislative Assembly Management Committee, which oversees the administration and operations of the Legislative Assembly.





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of BRITISH COLUMBIA